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JUVENILE

TALES AND STORIES.

BY
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THE TWO APPRENTICES.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

MAY-FAIR DAY AND THE GOOD MISS KENDRICKS.

IT was in the merry month of May, and the sixth day of the month; the sun shone warm and bright, and diffused a spirit of cheerfulness over the leafy woods and the richly pastoral country that surrounded the pleasant little town of Uttoxeter, or Utceter, as it was, for the sake of euphony, commonly called. The cuckoo had been up shouting for hours in the hedge-row trees of the little convenient crofts, full of grass, and enclosed with tall hawthorn hedges, now in full bloom, which environed the town; and the blackbird and the thristle were singing with all their might in the abundant gardens, which intersected or lay behind almost every house in the town. At six o'clock in the morning, all that little town was astir, for it was the morning of May-fair—an important day, for Utceter being, as it were, the metropolis of an extensive pastoral and farming district, its spring and autumn fairs were attended from both far and wide. The roads leading to it from all directions had, the preceding day, been filled with herds of cattle and

droves of sheep, and long trains of horses. Yellow and green caravans, containing wild beasts and jugglers, and fire-eaters, had driven through the neighbouring villages, giving to their inhabitants a foreknowledge of some of the wonders and attractions of the Fair. In the market-place of the town itself, all had been stir and bustle for four-and-twenty hours at least, and the inhabitants of the market-place shops declared it to be their opinion, that the people, with their booths, and stalls, and caravans, had been up and busy the livelong night. And it did look like it; for when, on that morning, they ventured their night-capped heads between their window-curtains for a peep, the whole open space was full of booths and stalls; and here was to be seen the tall sign-post of "Thomas Rigley, licensed dealer in stays, from Whitechapel, London;" and here, "James Ford, cutler, from Sheffield;" there, "Morgan O'Grady, the celebrated worm-doctor;" and beyond, "Jonas Solem, shoemaker, from Stafford," close by the side of "Aaron Tagg and Son, earthenware dealers, from Lane-Delf, in the Staffordshire Potteries;" whilst behind all these, like a great yellow wall, on which the morning sun shone dazzlingly, rose the four great caravans of "Roarem's Menagerie," flanked, on one hand, by the blue caravan of the Fire-Eater, and on the other, by the red-fronted tenement of the travelling theatre. It was the beginning of a gay day—quite a fête-day—and all looked so busy and wide awake, that the night-capped heads were popped back again, with the uncomfortable sense that they must have overslept themselves, till a glance at watch or time-piece, or else the sweet chimes of the church clock, told them it was only just six, and there was no reason to hurry.

The cuckoo shouted from the elm-trees, and the blackbirds sang in the pear-tree boughs ; and the sun shone, and the bells began to ring ; and the public-houses began to fill with farmers, clamouring for their breakfasts ; and the inhabitants of the streets in which the cattle and horse-fairs were held, left their lower window-shutters closed ; and jockeys began to crack off their steeds, and farmers began to handle prime stock, and the Fair was in active operation. The morning went on ; the jockey's business slackened ; the fat stock and the lean stock had found purchasers ; and the more vulgar part of the business drew to an end. In the meantime, the booths and the stalls had arranged their wares. Thomas Rigley, staymaker, of Whitechapel, hung out his "corsets," in opposition to Stephen Udal, the old accredited staymaker of the town, and laughed in his sleeve at the old-fashioned cut of things which had been made out of London. James Ford, the Sheffield cutler, displayed his knives and razors in shining order ; while Moses Birch, the town-cutler, assured the world around him, in a loud voice, that his wares were made to *cut*, and not, like some other folk's, only to *sell*. Morgan O'Grady exhibited horrid things in spirits, and counselled all loving parents, in his little printed papers, which flew about like leaves in autumn, to purchase for their children, a pennyworth of his famous worm-gingerbread ; and never since people trod upon soling leather, had been seen such tempting rows of shoes as those of Jonas Solem and the seven shoemakers of the town, who now, for the first time in their lives, agreed all together in the declaration, that if people wanted to buy shoes no better than if made of paper, they must buy them from the Stafford

makers. The booths of toys were already thronged with children, who, however, as yet, speculated rather on what they should buy, than actually bought. Farmers' wives were buying cheese-colouring, and new milking-pails and butter-prints; and getting their business all done before dinner, that they and their daughters might in the afternoon have "a bit of time" for amusement. The bells rang on more merrily than ever; the streets, where the horse and cattle-fairs had been held, were now all in progress of being swept and cleaned; and now the roads and the town-ends were all thronged again with cattle going out, and country people—lads and lasses, and mothers and children, and old grandfathers and grandmothers—coming in, for the afternoon's fun and merriment. The four big men, in beef-eater costume, outside the wild-beast show, blew their trumpets, and the lion within roared from time to time; the fire-eater's performances began; and the red front of the travelling theatre had been removed, and there was now seen an open stage in front of a canvas screen, and gaily attired nymphs, who looked to vulgar eyes as if stars of gold and silver had been showered upon them, walked arm-in-arm, to and fro, attracting the admiration of village swains and big boys, who flocked thither in crowds; whilst dashing, bandit-looking men, in cloaks and plumed hats, cast half-gallant, half-ferocious glances, upon the village maidens, and thus excited in them the most charming, romantic terror, which could only be allayed by their going up, and seeing all the wonders of that enchanted world which lay behind the canvas, and of which these beings were the inhabitants.

It was now noon, and the public-houses were full

of dinners and dinner-eating guests, who did not notice, as those did who were just coming into the fair, how clouds had gathered from the south-west, and threatened rain; a gusty wind, too, had arisen, and whirled the dust along the roads, and made a strange commotion among the booths and stalls in the market-place. It grew cold and dull; and then, just when dinner was over, and everybody was in the fair, and wanted to enjoy themselves, it really began to rain, and to rain in good earnest. It was no shower; there was no prospect of its soon being over; the sky was all one sullen mass of smoke-coloured cloud; and down, down, down came the soaking rain. The kennels soon ran over; and the badly-paved market-place was full of puddles, into which people unwittingly stepped, ankle-deep. It really was quite a melancholy thing to hear then the screech of a tin penny-trumpet, or the bark of a woolly dog in a little child's hand, as it stood, sheltering, with its mother, in a crowd of people, under an entry, yet never wondering, dear little soul, as they did, how in the world it was ever to get home. People had not brought umbrellas with them; and it was quite pitiable for anybody, but those who sold ribbons, to see smart girls walking along with pocket-handkerchiefs over their bonnets, quite wet through, and which now were all stained with the mingling and dripping dyes of their so lately blushing or verdant honours. People crowded into booths or under stalls—not to make purchases, but to find shelter; and went by throngs into the wild-beast show and the theatre, not so much to be entertained, as to get out of the rain; and all the time could think of nothing but how wet they were, and wonder how, if it

kept on raining, they were ever to get home that night.

At four o'clock, at five o'clock, at six o'clock, it rained just as hard as ever, and seemed as if it would rain all night; and the public-houses were brimful: in kitchen and parlour, and bed-room, and everywhere, there was a smell of wet clothes and tobacco smoke, and ale, and gin-and-water. What was to be done? What indeed was to be done? For at that very time, there came, slowly and heavily advancing into the town, one after another, in long and weary line, seven heavy baggage wagons belonging to a regiment which had marched shortly before through the town, on its way to Ireland. Wearily went onward the wagons along the wet, grinding street, piled up, as high as the houses, with baggage, and soldiers' wives and children. The drivers were wet; the horses were wet; the soldiers who attended the train were wet; and so were the wives and children, who, wrapped in gray woollen cloaks and coats, sat up aloft among the baggage: the rain lay in large pools in the hollows of the tarpauling, and rocked about, and spilled over, as the wagons went along unsteadily up the ill-paved street; and altogether, the whole train presented a most comfortless and weary appearance. On, however, it went, wagon after wagon; and cheerful families, sitting at home by their warm firesides, were filled with a kindly compassion for the poor strangers, who had arrived thus disconsolately and thus inopportunately.

There was no room in the market-place for the unloading of the luggage; so the wagons, having made the circuit of the town, came at length to a stand in the widest part of the widest street, and began slowly to unload.

Just opposite to where they halted, stood, with its large awkward porch in front, and its large, pleasant garden behind, the little, low, old-fashioned house, inhabited by the Miss Kendricks, Joanna and Dorothy. Their parlour lay a step below the street, and its window was almost on a level with it ; and, but that the pavement was always kept so nicely clean before it, must have been sadly splashed with the rain that poured down from the clouds, and dripped from the eaves above. The Miss Kendricks were, if not among the richest, among the most respectable inhabitants of the town. Their father, in their early youth, had been the well-beloved curate of the parish—a man so pure and good, and one who so nobly and beautifully performed all his duties, great and small, that God, to reward him best, took him home to himself. His wife, heart-broken for his loss, followed him within twelve months ; and left four children, Rebecca, Joanna, Leonard, and Dorothy, to the care of their great-uncle, a small shopkeeper of the place. The uncle was even then an old man—perhaps God spared his life for the sake of the orphans ; and why not, when he cares even for the sparrows ? He himself believed it was so ; and he lived on, not only to care for the orphans, but to become of no little consequence in the place, from being for so long a time “ the oldest inhabitant ”—a sort of living chronicle of events ; a referee on all difficult or disputed questions of right or usage. Alas ! poor old man, however, all did not go on so well and smoothly as he hoped and prayed for : Rebecca, the eldest of the orphans, grew up somewhat wild and wilful, and married sorely against his will. It was a marriage of unhappiness and poverty : she and her husband removed to a remote

part of England, and vanished, as it were, entirely from the knowledge of the family. The others, on the contrary, grew up into the most steady and promising manhood and womanhood. The girls he had educated simply, as, according to his notions, might best fit them for tradesmen's wives; but to the brother he gave the education of a gentleman and a scholar, and lived carefully, and almost parsimoniously himself, to maintain him respectably at Oxford. As regarded him, his wishes were all fulfilled; and on the evening of the day on which the news came that Leonard had received the degree of Bachelor of Arts, he died, as he sat quietly in his chair. The business of his life was done; and at the advanced age of ninety-five he was borne to his grave, honoured by the whole town. He left his house, and property to the amount of a hundred a-year, to his nieces and their brother; the house for them to live in as long as they needed such a home, and the money to his nephew, subject to a payment of thirty pounds a year to each sister. Miss Joanna was seven-and-twenty at the death of her uncle — a plain, old-fashioned little woman, who looked six or seven years older than she was; whilst Dorothy, on the contrary, looked younger, and though four-and-twenty, had all the bloom and liveliness of eighteen. Prepossessing, however, as was Dorothy, she, at the time of her uncle's death, had no accepted lover; whilst Joanna had been engaged to a stationer and printer of Lichfield, of the name of Allen, for a couple of years, and had only deferred her marriage from reluctance to leave her old relative in the then declining state of his health.

In such a little town as Utceter, everybody knew everybody's affairs; and therefore, no sooner was the

old gentleman dead, than all said, that for a certainty Miss Kendrick would marry, more especially as Leonard, who was now ordained, had the offer of a curacy in Derbyshire, and nothing seemed more natural than that the lively Dorothy should keep his house. Thus the world laid out things for them; and thus also, in the quiet of their little back parlour, they laid out things for themselves. The great-uncle, as we said before, was a small shopkeeper. He sold stamps and stationery, and small cutlery ware, and tea in sealed-up packets, as it came from the India House: he had, altogether, a nice little ready-money business, which amply supplied every passing week with cash for its current expenses, and some little besides; and it was no wonder, therefore, that after his death, several tradesmen of the place wished to purchase the business at a good premium.

It is an old and true saying, that "man proposes, and God disposes;" and it was so in this case. Leonard went to his curacy, whence he wrote the most affectionate and charming letters, full of the most fervent desires to do good in his parish, and to promote the happiness of his sisters. Joanna thought of, and made preparations for her marriage, which was to take place as soon as the time of full mourning for the old gentleman had expired; and in the meantime she kept on the business, prudently anxious to spare all, and save all, against the breaking up of the family. The weeks and months went on, and Dorothy, in the summer, paid a visit to her brother—a golden time to her, and an earnest, as she believed it, of the life which lay before her. It was a quiet, out-of-the-world, Peak village, where her brother lived; beautiful in its locality, and inhabited by people

as kind and simple-hearted as soul could wish, who received her among them as if she had been an angel from heaven ; whilst the few families there, of higher rank and intelligence, seemed at once to open their hearts and homes to her.

“How well you look, Dorothy !” said Joanna to her, on her return : “the Peak air agrees with you. Your eyes look brighter, and your colour clearer than ever !”

Dorothy looked at herself in the glass, and she thought so too. Poor Dorothy ! that was the last time she ever saw herself. The next day she felt unwell with headache and fever ; she grew worse and worse ; a medical man was called in, and in a day or two pronounced her to be ill of small-pox. We shall not go through that long and severe illness. Dorothy lay at the point of death ; and her brother and sister, unable to resign her into the hands of her Maker, prayed that, at any cost, her life might be spared. Their prayers were heard. She lived ; but not alone at the expense of her beauty ; she lost, what was far more, her eyesight. Well, indeed, may we say, poor Dorothy ! Life had now hard lessons for her—patience and submission. For herself, could she have chosen, she would rather have died than lived. She had just, as it were, become conscious of the worth of her beauty and of herself ; and now she was a poor, blind ruin—a spectacle to be shunned and pitied.

“Come again to me,” wrote Leonard ; “the Peak air will do you good : the people here all love you, and will be kinder to you than ever.”

“I will not go there, of all places in the world,” said Dorothy, with bitterness ; “I will not go there to be a burden to him, and a spectacle to the whole

parish ! Life has become hateful to me—would to God that I had died, or might die ere long !”

Joanna had the patience of an angel, and answered her sister's repinings with loving and gentle words. Winter came on ; and then spring ; and again the idea was revived of Dorothy's going to Leonard, for change of air ; whilst Joanna, whose lover was impatient for his marriage, made her preparations for this event. But to this proposal the poor invalid would not listen. She entertained the most fixed, and as it seemed obstinate, determination not to visit her brother ; nor would she assign any reason for so doing. Everybody but Joanna lost patience with her ; but she, never. “ She will become accustomed in time to her misfortune,” said she to her friends, and, above all, to the mother and sister of her affianced lover ; “ and in the meantime, we must have patience with her, as with a sick child. She is now,” said she, “ suffering from a mind diseased, which is worse than sickness of the body. Let us only have patience with her ;” and from month to month Joanna delayed her marriage, that she should not at least take so sad an invalid into the house of her husband. Day after day came his mother and sister, sometimes together, and sometimes alone, who lost no opportunity of dropping hints to poor Dorothy on the Christian duty of submission to our afflictions, and renunciation of our own wills.

“ Go, and take a walk, and get a mouthful of fresh air, for you look as pale as a ghost, with all this watching and anxiety, night and day,” said they continually to Joanna, in the hearing of her sister ; “ and we will mind the shop, and talk to Dorothy, while you are gone.”

For awhile Joanna obeyed, but presently she began to perceive that the unhappy and distressful state of her sister's mind was aggravated by these interviews. Dorothy was no longer open towards her ; there was a coldness and a reserve which she could not penetrate, which only increased her silence. Light, however, broke in, when the mother and sister, having, as they thought, discharged their duty to Dorothy, began to speak plainly to Joanna—she was not doing her duty either to her sister or herself, thus humouring her like a child ; a degree of firmness, and even severity, was requisite. Dorothy must learn to submit ; and when it pleases God to afflict us, said they, we must not stand in the way of other people's happiness with our whims and fancies. Leonard was willing to have Dorothy, and to him she ought to go ; a quiet country place would furnish her with the best home : Leonard had said that he would have a girl to wait upon her ; what did she want more ? and then Joanna must remember that she was not using Allen well ; he had had his house ready these two months, and how long did she mean to keep him waiting ? If Allen had not told her himself, they would do so, that he was tired of all this waiting and waiting, and he had no notion of anything but Dorothy's going at once to her brother's, and submitting to her afflictions as any good Christian ought to do ; and as Leonard, who was so good a man and preacher, would soon teach her, &c. &c., &c. !

Joanna said but little in reply, but sent over to Lichfield, to request an interview with her lover. He came ; and, as plain speaking had begun, it was soon evident that he held the same opinions as his family—perhaps, indeed, that they had been employed

to speak for him. Joanna said, considering the reluctance which her sister had shown to visiting her brother, she had entirely given up the thoughts of her ever residing with him; and that, in fact, wherever her home was, there also would be Dorothy's. Allen was silent. Joanna's spirit was roused; did he then not wish her sister to live with them? He hummed and hawed, as people do who are ashamed of speaking out their real minds. She then said, that he was free to choose another wife; for without she had his most full and free consent to Dorothy living with them, and to her own share of whatever the sale of the business might produce being settled upon her, she would never become his wife.

Whether Allen looked for some such consummation as this; or whether he wished it—whether he was tired of his old love, and wished to be on with a new—is not for us to say; but on hearing these words, he quietly rose up from his chair, and in a tone rather of ill-humour than grief, said, “Very well; then I suppose there will be an end of the matter.”

“I suppose there will,” said Joanna, without the least agitation.

“If you alter your mind before night,” said he, “you can let me know; I will stay so long at my mother's.”

“I shall not alter my mind,” said Joanna; “and I thank God that I have found you out before it was too late.”

Nothing more was said; Allen took his hat, and left the house; and Joanna did not alter her mind. The next day the mother and sister came, and were a deal more vehement on the subject than Allen had been; they upbraided her and scolded her no little, and had no mercy on the poor blind Dorothy, who,

however, did not hear what was said. It was a long, stormy day ; but, like all other days, it came to an end ; and Joanna, who in the course of it said that Allen had not in truth shown much *real* love for her, and could soon find another wife for his new house and furniture, was right ; for, within a month of that day, he married a young lady of Lichfield ; and this, his mother and sister took care to say, was the best day's work he ever did.

All this seemed easy enough for Allen ; he suffered, apparently, nothing. Joanna, on the contrary, suffered much ; she had loved sincerely and with her whole soul, and she threw herself now on the kind affections, and loving, though clouded heart of poor Dorothy for consolation. Nor was she deceived. Dorothy roused herself from her lethargy, and forgot her own sorrows in alleviating those of her sister. This was the really cementing bond between them. Each bore the other's burden, and felt how good sympathy was for a wounded heart. The reserve on the part of Dorothy gradually gave place to confidence and openness, and, in proportion as she came to speak of her morbid unhappiness, it left her. One of her greatest trials was to allow herself to be seen ; and, for this reason, she could not be induced to go out. It was quite natural, perhaps, for she had been reckoned very pretty, and had been greatly admired by all the young men of the neighbourhood ; and now, though she could not see her face, she knew that she had become very plain. Great, therefore, was the good Joanna's delight, when one fine evening she said, suddenly,

“ Tie that thick veil of which you have spoken on my bonnet, Joanna, and take me to Bramshall Wood.

I long to hear the gurgling of the little brook there, and to smell the cowslips : you will gather me some, and I know how they look."

Joanna could have cried for joy to hear her sister speak thus, and went with her to the wood. They sat down by the side of the little stream, the brightest and clearest of little woodland streams, and listened to the songs of the birds ; and Joanna gathered flowers, which she placed in the hands of her poor blind sister.

"You have often thought me selfish and unreasonable," said Dorothy, at length ; "I know you have, and so did Mr. Allen and Martha. I know I have not been submissive," said she, preventing her sister's interruption, "and let me speak, Joanna, now, for I feel as if I could open my heart to you, and it will relieve me of a great burden ; for, though I have told you many things, I have not told you all, and to-night I feel as if I could." Joanna put her arm round her sister's waist, and Dorothy continued :—

"I was very happy, formerly, very happy indeed ; I wanted nothing that I did not possess ; I had no wish beyond my own sphere, and in that sphere I possessed all that I desired, my uncle's love and yours. I was happy, too, in the consciousness of being good-looking ; I felt that I had the power of pleasing ; looks of admiration met me and followed me, and I was happy that it was so. Perhaps I was vain. At that time, however, I should have denied it, but now I think that perhaps I was so, and God saw right to punish me ; and oh, Joanna, what a heavy punishment for so light an offence !"

"God is good," said Joanna, with emotion, "and his chastenings are only in love !"

“I believe it,” returned Dorothy, “and I will not repine; nor is it for this that I came here to-night. I came here to ask your forgiveness for many faults, for much impatience, for much obstinacy, and perhaps in part to explain what has not been clear in me, especially as regards my unwillingness to visit Leonard. Ah, you will then see, Joanna, what reason I have to sympathise with you, for I have suffered like you! I was very happy whilst I was with Leonard: you know it; but neither he nor you know what it was that really constituted my happiness, and then made the bitterness of my misery. I loved—loved deeply and truly. Nay, do not start, Joanna—the joy and the misery are both past. I have resigned the dearest hopes of my soul at God’s requiring, and the time of peace is now come!”

Dorothy was silent a few moments, and Joanna wiped away both her own tears and those which flowed from the darkened eyes of her sister.

“You have heard of Henry Ashdown, the squire’s nephew. Leonard mentioned him in his letters—in the first letter, I remember, that ever he sent to us from Winston. He was a gay, but good-hearted young man, Leonard said. On the very day of my arrival at Winston, Leonard told me that Mrs. Ashdown, Henry’s mother, who had been for many years a sad invalid, was then at the Hall, for her health; that, for her piety and many remarkable virtues, he had become much attached to her; and that it was his wish that I should contribute as much as possible to her comfort and amusement. I went often to see her, and thus Henry and I met. I loved the mother; but ah, I loved also the son. The mother made me the minister of her mercies to the poor, for she was

the most charitable of women ; and whilst Leonard read to her in pious books, I went on her errands of benevolence : but I never went alone. Leonard is simple-hearted and unsuspecting as a child, and never seemed to notice the intimacy between Henry and me. I was happy—oh, how happy!—in my love ; and, though Henry never formally avowed his passion for me, his looks and actions bespoke it as plainly as words. His uncle wished him to marry the daughter of a rich neighbouring squire : his mother also acquiesced in it ; for, as he was his uncle's heir, she consulted his wishes in all things. He himself, however, did not second their plans—at least, he told me so ; adding, that he meant to marry to please only himself, and would give his hand where he had already given his heart. I left Winston, to return, as I fondly hoped, in a few months ; and ah, how impatiently did I look forward to that time ! Heaven forgive me, if in it I forgot everything. All that followed you know——Henry Ashdown never inquired after me ; how was it likely that he would marry me, disfigured and blind ? Oh, Almighty God, why was I spared to become the poor object that I am ! ”

Again Dorothy paused, and again the two sisters mingled their tears. “ Yes, I know what followed,” said Joanna, at length.

“ Leonard's letters,” continued Dorothy, “ told of Henry's marriage and residence at the Hall. How could I then go to Winston ?—how could I, blind though I am, sit in the same church with Henry and his bride ? Oh, Joanna, what wonder then was it, when your sorrows came, that I could enter into your heart, and sympathise so deeply with you !

Hence is it that sorrow is so universal, that we may have mercy and compassion on one another !”

Joanna drew her sister yet more closely to her, and laid her head upon her bosom, and kissed her blind eyes, and felt that she had never loved her so tenderly as then.

The little shop was continued as in the time of the old uncle, and thus furnished constant occupation for Joanna ; but while yet there lay upon poor Dorothy the languor of enfeebled health and of a cruelly disappointed heart, the hand of God, which chastens only in love, sent a new sorrow to bind her heart, as it were, all the more to Him. Leonard wrote thus to his sisters :—

“ I am at length compelled to deal frankly with you. I am not well I have felt very weak and poorly since the winter, when I suffered much from cold. I have latterly been much at the Hall. Mrs. Ashdown has been very kind to me, and has nursed me like a mother. I have had a physician from Ashburn, and he recommends a warmer climate. Here, even in summer, the air is keen ; and as I feel myself now unable to preach, I have consented to give up the curacy for the present. I do this with the greatest reluctance, for I love the people, and I see among them a sphere of great usefulness ; and if I am not able to return, I trust that God in his mercy will send hither a shepherd, who will faithfully care for his flock. At the present time, however, I yearn to be with you. My heart’s desire and prayer to God is that he may make me submissive to His will. Farewell ! The day after you receive this, I shall be with you.”

The anxieties and sorrows of his sisters were for-

gotten in the distress caused by this letter. Leonard had hitherto said nothing of illness, and now they knew indeed that he must be ill to give up thus his pastoral duties. Dorothy roused herself in the sad thought of her brother's illness, and with a prophetic feeling, which she would not, however, avow to herself, that he came home to die. Blind as she was, she arranged the pillows for him on the sofa which she had hitherto occupied, with a zeal and activity of self-forgetfulness that made Joanna see the truth of her own maxim, that with every misfortune there came some compensating blessing.

Leonard returned, and even Dorothy perceived how great was the change in him: he was far gone in consumption, and the most inexperienced eye could see that he had not long to live. But that short time was as the tarriance of an angel, and left a blessing behind it. The words of love and consolation which fell from his lips were spoken in the spirit of his divine Master: "Let not your hearts be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you."

The influence of the dying brother was good upon both sisters, but most especially on Dorothy; she never left her brother night nor day; she sat with his hand in hers, like Mary at the feet of Christ, listening to his blessed words of salvation; whilst Joanna, like Martha, though without her dissatisfied heart, waited upon them both.

Joanna feared greatly the effect which her brother's death would have on Dorothy, but the effect was different from what she expected. Whilst he lived, her very breath seemed to hang upon his; but when

his blessed spirit had departed, like David of old, she arose, and, as it were, girded herself to combat against the weaknesses of her soul, and to practise all those lessons of patience and submission, and trust in God, which she learned from him.

From this time, in the true spirit of Christian resignation, Dorothy, though blind and scarred by the ravages of a fearful disease, was never heard to complain. She discovered in herself the most remarkable sources of activity and amusement. Her hands were never idle, whilst the cheerfulness of her mind made her company really attractive. Years went on ; Dorothy's once rich black hair had become white before its time ; and when her sister, without explaining the cause for so doing, placed a quiet cap on her head, she submitted without remark, instinctively understanding the reason why it was done.

Joanna, when arrived at middle life, contrary to what she had done in her youth, looked younger than she really was ; and, small though her income was (she had given up the shopkeeping several years before), she was really a person of some consequence in the town. In every benevolent scheme she was an operator, managing or serving ; and a never-failing counsellor and comforter to the poor in difficulty or distress.

CHAPTER II.

THE OSBORNES AND THEIR FAMILY TROUBLES.

"IT is a terrible evening for these poor people to arrive on," said Joanna to her sister, who sat knitting on the sofa, upon that rainy evening of May-fair day, as the baggage-wagons were unloaded before their

Windows, and one weary woman after another, stiff with having sat so many hours up aloft among wet boxes and tired children, was helped down from her elevation, and seemed only to put herself in motion with difficulty. The good Joanna was full of compassion, and pitied their having to find quarters in the noisy and crowded public-houses, where they would be unwelcome guests both to landlord and landlady. Greatly interested as she was by the whole arrival, her sympathies were presently enlisted on behalf of a woman who, overcome by more than fatigue, seemed unable to stand, and seated herself on one of the chests; whilst a boy, of about twelve, seemed to be the only one who took much thought about her. She was wrapped in a large gray cloak; and the hood, which was drawn over her head, partially revealed a face which was pale and dejected. The boy ran hither and thither to the various groups of women, who began to move off in various directions, and then back again to the sick woman, for whose comfort he seemed very solicitous, for he lugged along a small chest, upon which he made her place her feet, and then wrapped her cloak about her with the most affectionate care. All this Joanna described to her sister, and then called her servant, bidding her take her pattens and umbrella, and go across, and ask if the poor woman would come in and shelter. Instead of returning with her as was expected, Joanna saw her servant give her her arm, and sheltering her with her large umbrella, move off along the street, whilst the boy trudged after, carrying a large bundle. On the return of the servant, it appeared that the woman, who was delicate, had been taken ill on the road; that she was billeted to the

Talbot ; and, as there were two public-houses in the town of that name, it was supposed to be the one lying at some distance, whereas it proved to be the one just at hand, and thither the maid had escorted her. The woman, she said, seemed to be subdued and spiritless, as if she cared not what became of her ; while the boy, on the contrary, seemed as if he would move heaven and earth to get her attended to, for he ran into the house, and demanded attention both from host and hostess, and never rested till a comfortable bed, in an upper room, was allotted to her, and then set about opening his bundle, and getting her into bed, just as if he had been a regular sick-nurse. The woman had fallen into a fainting fit, she said, just as she had told her that her mistress, Miss Kendrick, had sent her ; but she thought the boy understood, as well as Mrs. Tunncliffe, the landlady, that her mistress, who was very good to the poor, would go and see her if she was no better, and pray by her, or she could have the clergyman, if she liked it better ; only he was such a young man, and many folks would much rather have Miss Kendrick than he.

Miss Kendrick was very well satisfied with what her maid had done ; and commissioning her, the first thing in the morning, to run over, and inquire after the invalid, she went to bed. Scarcely, however, was the servant down-stairs the next morning, when a message came from the sick woman, requesting a little conversation with Miss Kendrick ; to which was added, from the landlady, that she was so ill, she could not last long. In half an hour, Miss Kendrick was with her, and her first impression was that the hand of death was indeed upon her. She was propped up in bed, and seemed feeble in the last degree.

“Are we alone?” asked she, casting her mournful eyes round the room. “We are, mother,” said the boy, throwing himself on his knees at the bed’s foot; “there is only the lady, and you and me.”

She looked steadily at Miss Kendrick, and then said, slowly and with difficulty, “I am Rebecca—your unhappy, outcast sister. God brought me here to die. I knew it as I entered the town, when the baggage-train could not enter the market-place, but made halt before the very house where I had been a child—from whence I set out when I took my fate into my own hands!”

Joanna, petrified with astonishment and compassion, seized her hand and gazed into her face.

“Yes,” said the woman, “I am Rebecca, your sister, though you may not recognise me.”

“My poor, unhappy sister!” exclaimed Joanna, embracing her with tears. “Thank God that you are found at last! You shall live with us—with Dorothy and me—you shall yet be happy!”

“Never more in this world!” interrupted she. “I know I have not long to live, and yet I have much to say—let me speak while I have the power.—My first husband died. I thought to mend my condition. I married a second time; but there was not a blessing on anything I did. I married yet more unhappily. I have had nine children by my two husbands. The youngest child, a girl, is left behind with its grandmother,—a good woman. This is my youngest boy,—he is my Benjamin. The two older than he died. It was good for them. Of the other six two are married, two are beyond seas, and one—oh my God, have pity on the outcasts of society; for all are thy children!” After a long pause, she again pro-

ceeded :—"My husband is a soldier,—a private in the —, now in Ireland, and which we follow. He was a very handsome man ; and that was my bane. He was of an unbroken temper, and was not loved in the regiment. I suffered much from him ; and yet I would not leave him. I always went with the regiment ; for the officers' ladies liked me. I was a good laundress, and got up their fine linens to their mind ; and for this reason, spite of my poor health, was permitted to accompany the regiment to Ireland. I was, however, taken very ill on the journey. I began to spit blood ; and at Wolverhampton, I felt it was all over with me ; for a dreadful thing came to my knowledge there." With these words she drew from under her pillow a part of a newspaper, which she put into Joanna's hand, and bade her read, but not aloud. She read how one Peter Reynolds, a private in the — regiment of foot soldiers, bound for Ireland, who had been guilty of some misdemeanor on the march, had deserted immediately on their arrival in Dublin, been retaken, and sentenced by court-martial to be shot.

"He is my husband," said the poor dying woman after a time. "I thought I should have died as I read the paper. I told nobody, however, but him," said she, looking at the boy, "and he has the sense of a grown man. I knew how little Reynolds was liked in the regiment, and that there was no hope for him ; and for that reason I wanted all the more to see him before it happened. I thought I might comfort him ; for oh, it's a dreadful thing to die in that way, when a man's in his full strength." She could say no more. Her distress of mind was excessive ;

and one fainting fit succeeded another so rapidly that she was unable to converse again through the day. The boy in the meantime, who showed the strongest affection towards her, and an intelligence and prudence beyond his years, won the entire love of Joanna.

In the evening, as the sick woman seemed somewhat better, she was removed on a bed to the house of her sisters ; and in three days from that time she died. It was an event of course which made a deal of talk in the town. Many people remembered Rebecca Kendrick and her unhappy marriage ; but to the great joy of her sisters, the miserable and disgraceful end of her second husband was never or scarcely known in the town.

" I wonder whether Mr. Osborne would take poor William as an apprentice," said Dorothy to her sister a day or two after the funeral ; " a chemist and druggist's is a good business, and they are such kind people."

" I have thought of that too," returned Joanna, " for we will do all we can for him ; what a clever, nice boy he is ! But it is odd that we have seen nothing of the Osbornes for these three or four days ; nor have they sent down to inquire after us. However, when it gets dusk, I will put on my things and go and have some talk with them about William."

The Osbornes were Miss Kendrick's most intimate friends. He, as it may be inferred, was a chemist and druggist. He had one of those dingy, old-fashioned shops, saturated with the smell of drugs and physic, which are only to be found in old-fashioned places. His wife and he, who had no family, were patterns of conjugal felicity ; each thinking the other as near perfection as poor human

nature could be ; and they were not very far from the mark, for better people than they, making allowance for some little intermixture of human weakness, could hardly be found. They had been fast, lifelong friends of the Kendricks ; and not a week passed without their spending an evening together. It was no wonder, therefore, that Joanna was surprised that for the last three or four days they had heard nothing of them. Joanna resolved to go to them when it was dusk ; but as it is not yet dusk, we shall find the interval very convenient for making the reader acquainted with some farther particulars regarding them, which it is very important for him to know.

Mr. and Mrs. Osborne were now somewhat past middle life, and had been married nearly thirty years. At the time of her marriage, there was a young sister, the daughter of her father by a second marriage, dependent upon her. The mother died in giving birth to this child, who, however, never felt her loss in the love and care of her elder sister. The father died when she was about ten years old ; and soon afterwards the elder sister married ; and in her husband the child found a second father. She grew up gentle and beautiful ; and the love of this affectionate pair was lavished upon her. Never was girl more tenderly nurtured, more beloved, or more indulged. She had all her heart could wish ; and she appeared to deserve it.

The Osbornes, though tradespeople, were well to do, and the young lady was admitted to the best society of the place ; and as she advanced towards womanhood, had the chance of making several advantageous matches. For some time she appeared

difficult to please, till at length a gay young stranger, whom she accidentally met with, fixed her fancy. Her friends objected somewhat to the match. In the first place, he was a stranger; in the second place, he lived far off, that is to say, in Liverpool; and to them, who wished to have their darling fixed near to them for life, Liverpool seemed a long way off; thirdly, and which was most important of all, there was a something—an indescribable something—about this Louis Edwards which was unsatisfactory to the plain-dealing and straightforward sincerity of Mr. Osborne. He was plausible, had a reason for everything, and though he was an American by birth and connections, he had lived so many years in England as to be English in his feelings. Still for all that, and though he was a broker by trade, and had a partner, a man of reputation and substance, and had altogether a very imposing manner, Mr. Osborne never liked him; and felt so strongly that there *was* a something, though it was impossible to say what, which created misgivings, that he and his wife refused their consent.

Edwards was dismissed; and the loving, gentle, all-acquiescent Phebe promised to give him up. If there be an occasion beyond all others which awakens the affection of parents to their children—and the Osbornes were as parents to Phebe—it is when they see a child submissively giving up its beloved will and wishes to their sterner reason and judgment. The Osbornes felt thus, and thought that they could not sufficiently show their affection to her; and were devising a thousand little schemes for her happiness and indulgence, when one dreary day in November she was gone! They could not conceive whither, till the second day's post brought a letter from her

beseeking their forgiveness, and saying that as she knew they desired her happiness, they must allow her to become happy in her own way, which was by uniting her fate to that of Edwards. This she had done, and must now throw herself on their mercy, assuring them that her future life should prove how grateful she was for all their former kindness.

A letter like this is at such a time a mockery. Better by far is it to weep over a child borne to the grave with all its young fair promise in the bud, than to see one that we love as our own life running wilfully and headlong into ruin spite of all our warning and our prayers ! The Osbornes thought so. Her deceit and disobedience cut them to the heart, and their prejudices were only the more strengthened against a match which had begun so badly. Grieved however as they were, from the bottom of their souls they pitied her ; for they felt sure that a time would come when she would bitterly repent.

“Alas, Phebe,” said good Mr. Osborne in his reply to her letter, “what is this which you have done ! But we will not speak of the sorrow which we foresee. May God bless you, though you have grieved us sorely ! You are young, and life lies all before you ; be a good wife ; be true to your husband in good and in evil ; atone for your want of duty to us by your duty to him ; and so may God Almighty bless you !”

The Osbornes did not turn their backs on Phebe ; but remembered her in sorrow rather than in anger ; and this strong proof of their affection touched her much more deeply than any evidences of their displeasure could have done. The match, however, in a worldly point of view, did not appear so bad.

Edwards lived handsomely ; and, though Phebe could never persuade her brother and sister to visit her, she failed not to tell them of her prosperity, of her gay life and acquaintance, and of her happiness as a wife and mother. Whether, however, she gave a brighter colouring to things than they deserved ; whether she wished to deceive others, or was herself deceived, we cannot say ; but at the very time when she was writing of her happiness and prosperity, her husband's name appeared in the gazette, and they were deeply insolvent bankrupts.

“The world is not surprised, my dear Phebe, at what has happened, however you may be,” wrote Mr. Osborne to her, “nor are we. The time of trial is now come ; faint not now, nor lose courage ; and above all things do not forget God, who chastises us only in love.”

Poor Phebe ! the time of trial was indeed come ; and, for the first time in her life, she learnt what it was to deny herself and take up her cross daily. Every one finds this to be a hard lesson ; and Phebe was one to feel it bitterly. Edwards removed from Liverpool to London ; had one clerkship after another, and lived as he could, now with money and now without ; yet never losing his unabashed plausibility, and buoying himself up with the notion that after all he should do somehow or other.

Few and far between were the letters which Phebe wrote to her friends ; and though she never complained of narrow circumstances, she wrote mournfully of the sickness and death of two of her children. The Osbornes on their part were extremely anxious about her ; and though she never solicited aid from them, the five and ten-pound notes which good Mr. Osborne occasionally inclosed were always

thankfully accepted. They invited her and her one remaining child to come and visit them,—to remain through a long winter with them; but this she declined, without assigning any reason for so doing.

Not long afterwards, however, she wrote to them a humble letter, and one which bore evidence of being written with difficulty; it was on behalf of her husband, to beg the loan of a few hundred pounds, as he had the chance of entering into partnership in a speculation which promised to return cent. per cent. Mr. Osborne refused, on the plea of want of confidence in Edwards and his schemes. The next post brought a letter from Edwards himself, full of the most plausible statements regarding his scheme, and urging the loan of the money almost as a right on behalf of his wife. This letter was immediately followed by one from Phebe to her sister, begging her in the most urgent and moving terms to use her influence with her husband, as not only Edwards' worldly prosperity depended on this money being raised, but her own happiness also. There was an urgent tone of almost desperation in the letter, and an instability in the handwriting, that showed the most agitated state of mind. The Osbornes were moved; and, accompanying the money with a letter of grave tradesman-like advice to Edwards, Mr. Osborne remitted it on no other security than his note.

Within a few months, Phebe wrote again; the cloud had evidently passed away; but from this time the tone of her letters was much more serious than formerly. She spoke little of her husband, but much of her child, then six years old, of which she seemed extremely fond. A year went on, and letters came but seldom; a second year, and then Edwards and

his partner were again bankrupt. Edwards accused his partner of roguery and mismanagement, and some person who accidentally had seen Phebe in London brought news of her wan and care-worn appearance.

The relations thought more of her distress than of the loss of their money. For two more years nothing was heard of them ; and how they lived never came to their relations' knowledge. At length, one winter's day, a woman wrapped in a large plaid cloak knocked at the private door and begged to speak with Mrs. Osborne alone. After some hesitation she was brought in ; and when they two were together, she announced herself as Phebe Edwards.

"I know how shocked you are to see me," said she, "I am greatly changed ; but that is of small account. I am become regardless of my looks."

The good people wept over her ; and received her as the father in the gospel received his prodigal son.

"You are come to stay with us," said they, "you will never leave us again."

"I am going again to-night," said Phebe, "my business is urgent. I dared not write, nor would I let Edwards come himself."

She then explained that by the kind interference of a gentleman who had known her husband in Liverpool, he had the chance of a situation in a banking-house in London, provided some responsible man would be surety for him to the amount of five hundred pounds. Phebe paused ; for the money her brother-in-law had already lost by her husband was in her mind, and she saw that it was in his also.

"I know your thoughts," said she, "and because you have already suffered so much, I would not write to you ; but, brother, it is the privilege of the

good to forgive injuries—to return good for evil. Forgive us, therefore, what you have already suffered from us; I have prayed God to forgive us, even as I knew you had done, and you will not close your heart against us. Oh!” said she, clasping together her hands, and fixing upon him her large, sunken, and tearless eyes, “I have made my child pray to God every night to bless you; because I thought that the prayers of a child most surely ascended to heaven! I know,” continued she more calmly, “that you have very little reason to trust either Edwards or me; but if you cast us off, then are we lost for ever! I do not pretend or attempt to excuse Edwards; but he is heartily sorry for the past—he has been unfortunate, we have all suffered much, and we are all humble now; and from you we ask this one chance of regaining our place in society!”

“Oh stay with us, Phebe,” said Mrs. Osborne, quite overcome by her sister’s words, “stay with us, and you and your child shall never want.”

“The first letter,” returned Phebe, “which I received from Mr. Osborne after my marriage, contained these words, ‘atone for your want of duty to us by your duty to your husband, and so may God Almighty bless you!’ these words I have never forgotten. They have been hitherto, and shall still be, the law of my life; let my husband’s fortune be what it may, I abide with him to the last.”

“She is right, Sarah, she is right,” said Mr. Osborne, wiping his eyes and rising from his seat; “and I will be surety for Edwards for her sake. I will give him this one trial more.”

Poor Phebe, who hitherto had not shed one tear,

now overcome by the generous kindness of her brother, covered her face with both her hands and wept like a child. How the rest of the day was spent may easily be imagined; the best which the house could offer was set before her; and her sister, taking her into her own chamber, questioned her closely of her wants and actual condition. But whatever Phebe's sufferings had been, she kept much to herself. To poverty she confessed, and to all the hardships and anxieties which poverty brings with it; but not one word did she utter against her husband, although her sister never lost the impression that she had suffered much unkindness from him.

True to her first intentions, she returned by coach that night to London, taking with her good store of many things which the bounty and overflowing affection of her sister heaped upon her.

Phebe's visit had entirely reinstated her in the hearts of her relations, and the next year Mr. Osborne did such an unheard-of thing as go to London himself, on business he said, but in reality to see her and her children: for a second child, a little girl, was now born to her. On his return, he related that they were living quietly, and with some appearance of comfort; but that there was still a look of depression and anxiety about her, while Edwards on the contrary seemed scarcely changed, excepting that he was grown slightly grey and much stouter than when he married; but he was as well dressed as then; as gay in spirits, as plausible; and to the conscientious and somewhat suspicious mind of Mr. Osborne, as unsatisfactory as ever. For his own peace of mind as regarded them, it was a pity that he had ever been to visit them. The only thing that gave them real

satisfaction was that Edwards retained his situation ; and at the end of the second year received an increase of salary, which Phebe did not fail to communicate to her relations. Three years had now gone on, and we are arrived at the period when our story opens.

The Osbornes and the Kendricks were, as we have said, fast friends ; the somewhat similar marriages of Phebe and the unhappy Rebecca, had made, for years, a great sympathy of feeling between them. Mrs. Osborne was at their house, and sitting by the side of Rebecca's bed when she died, and her husband had attended her to the grave

Much attached, however, as they were to their friends, they said nothing of the disgrace which had befallen Rebecca's husband and the father of the nephew whom they had adopted, thinking, with a natural and jealous feeling of family pride, that there was no good in publishing the dishonour of one's own connexions.

Some such feeling as this operated on the mind of good Mrs. Osborne as she sat in the dusk of evening in the little parlour beside the shop, with the candles unlighted, and heard her friend Miss Kendrick inquire with astonishment about Mr. Osborne's sudden journey to London, of which Mr. Isaacs the shopman had told her.

Yes, said Mrs. Osborne, but in an incommunicative tone, her husband was suddenly called to London by a letter from poor Phebe. She feared things were going on but badly with them,—how, she did not say, merely adding, “but I wish nothing to be said about it; the least said the better as we all know.”

Joanna was a reasonable woman, and she excused

her friend's reserve, sincerely sympathising with her in having any new cause of anxiety and distress. Leaving her, therefore, to open her business respecting her nephew to Mrs. Osborne as a sort of preliminary step in the affair, we will communicate to the reader that unhappy circumstance regarding the Edwards's, which Joanna knew only later.

The letter which Phebe had written was rather indefinite, but one which filled those to whom it was addressed with horror. It spoke of temptation and crime, of loss of character for ever, and of the severest punishment of the law, and besought her brother-in-law to hasten to them immediately. He did so, and found his worst fears to be true. Edwards had been again tempted to embark in some wild speculation; money was wanted which his own means did not supply, and having gained the confidence of his employers, he had taken advantage of it, and had, at two several times, drawn money from the bank by forged orders in the names of merchants who had large dealings with the house. In the first instance, six months had elapsed without detection; in the second, to a larger amount, detection came speedily.

On the first moment of alarm, he had escaped on board a vessel bound for Hamburgh; but had been pursued and taken while the vessel was under weigh. There was not a word to be said in his extenuation; the fact was as it were proved upon him; he was in the fangs of the law, and was committed to take his trial.

Such were the facts respecting which Mrs. Osborne might well be excused from saying much. In a week's time her husband was again at home; and Miss Kendrick made application on behalf of her

nephew being apprenticed to his business. Mr. Osborne said that he had just engaged a young apprentice, whom he shortly expected; that two at once was rather too much; but considering the case of poor Reynolds, and that it was to oblige Miss Kendrick, he would talk with Mr. Isaacs and see if it could not be arranged; and that she should know in a day or two. Within a day or two, Joanna and her sister resolved upon going to Matlock for a few weeks, and taking their nephew with them; so that there was full time to deliberate. The season was fine. Miss Kendrick found company to their taste at Matlock; and to the great joy of the boy, who now for the first time in his life knew what ease and pleasure were, the stay was lengthened to the end of July.

On their return, Miss Kendrick went to hear the decision of her friend the druggist; again he was not in the shop, but there stood behind the counter a slim, gentlemanly youth, who, under the direction of Mr. Isaacs, was folding up, very successfully, penny-worths of Epsom salts and flowers of brimstone. This was evidently the new apprentice of whom Mr. Osborne had spoken. On inquiring for that gentleman, Miss Kendrick learned, to her surprise, that both he and his wife were in London.

"It must be about that miserable business of the Edwards's," said she to Dorothy on her return. Of course it was, and all the town knew it by this time; for the newspapers had detailed the affair from one end of the kingdom to the other.

The trial was now over. Edwards had pleaded his own cause most skilfully and eloquently, but in vain; he was found guilty, and condemned to four-

teen years' transportation. On hearing his sentence, Edwards seemed to feel, for the first time, the crushing weight of his unhappy circumstances. A paleness as of death overspread his countenance ; and, but for the support of the turnkey, he would have fallen to the ground. Mr. Osborne visited him the next day in prison ; and, for the first time in his life, felt compassion for him. Edwards was in fact a man of real talent and great power of mind, with some tendencies to good ; but alas ! he was one of those who have not the ability to resist temptation. He was of a sanguine temperament, and was always confident of success. When, therefore, humiliation and failure *did* come, he was only the more cast down. His spirit was now broken, and the better parts of his character came forth. These, as it were, took the kind heart of Mr. Osborne by surprise ; and now, with a reaction of feeling which is very natural to a generous mind, he felt as if he must compensate for his hitherto hard judgment ; and this he did by more than free forgiveness.

Phebe during the whole time had been calm and collected. The worst had come that could come ; and God and good men had not abandoned her. That kind brother, who had been as a father to her in her youth, stood by her in this hour of trial. He had already adopted her son as his own ; and thus removed, as it were, from the knowledge and contamination of evil, she trusted that his course through life might be easier and happier than that of his parents. Phebe's resolve from the first had been to remove with her youngest child, a little girl of two years old, to the land where her husband was now a banished man. Her brother made no objection ; and

he and his wife accordingly came up, two weeks before the time of her departure, to provide for her comforts on the voyage, and to take leave of her for ever. She sailed at the beginning of August ; and the convict ship in which was her husband at the end of the same month.

Their careers seemed thus brought to an end in this hemisphere ; and therefore leaving them, the one with his weaknesses and his misdeeds, the other expiating the errors of her youth by a life of patience and duty, we will turn more particularly to the son, who will henceforth be one of the principal heroes of our little story.

CHAPTER III.

THE TWO APPRENTICES.

THE youth, like his father, was called Louis, with the additional Christian name of William, which his mother had given to him in love and grateful remembrance of her brother-in-law Mr. Osborne ; and now his good uncle and aunt, anxious to remove from him any infamy connected with his father's misconduct, transposed and slightly altered his names, and called him Edward Lewis Williams. Edward Williams was therefore only an ordinary young apprentice—it was given out that he was an orphan—with whose history the world had nothing to do ; and though Mr. Isaacs and the whole household soon saw that he was not treated like an ordinary apprentice, the world did not readily conjecture that he was the son of the convict Edwards.

“Let Williams come into the parlour,” said Mr.

Osborne, as he was leaving the shop for the evening, to his assistant Mr. Isaacs, "I would have a little talk with him before his fellow-apprentice comes; he seems a sharp, clever youth, I think," said Mr. Osborne.

"A little too much of a gentleman at present," returned Mr. Isaacs, who was a thorough tradesman, and had no patience with any dandyism behind the counter, "and sharp and clever he is with a witness; he has broken half a gross of vials, two graduated measures, and a Corbyn quart, within the last fortnight; but he has taken prodigiously to practical chemistry, and so that he does not blow the house up, he may be of some use in time."

"We must teach him to be careful," said Mr. Osborne, advancing to the door, "send him in as soon as he comes," repeated he, and disappeared through the half-glass door with the green silk curtain, that led to the parlour where his good wife always sat at her work.

Mr. Osborne had a little code of morals—it is a thousand pities that it never was printed—which he delivered orally to his apprentices many times during the earlier part of their apprenticeship; and he now wished particularly to insist on that part which related to "your duties towards your fellow-apprentices." This warned of bad example, either set by themselves or followed in others; insisted on truth, sobriety, kindness; on advising in love; on "doing as they would be done by." Mrs. Osborne always cried when her husband thus lectured his young apprentices. She felt as if the boys were her own children, and she always said that no clergyman could preach to them as her husband did. "And now remember,"

concluded Mr. Osborne, "that the happiness and well-being of your future life depend upon the dispositions you cultivate and the habits you acquire in youth ;—are you idle, wasteful, unpunctual, dilatory in youth, it is vain to look for industry, frugality, exactness, and promptitude in after-life. *A religious, active youth will ensure, as far as human means can do it, a respectable and prosperous age!*" These last words Mr. Osborne never failed to speak with remarkable emphasis, nor did he omit it on this occasion. Thus far, the young apprentice had been fed with what may be called, in the style of Jean Paul or our Carlyle, the common apprentice-bread ; afterwards came the cake-of-love which was broken for his especial eating ; and this was literally a love-feast, at which the good aunt as well as uncle assisted.

Some little they said on his peculiar circumstances, on the awful example which would ever remain before him in his father's career ; but oh, how tenderly and lovingly was this warning enforced ! The youth—and he was a slender, handsome youth—sat with his graceful head supported on his well-formed hand, and his intelligent brown eyes fixed on the countenance of his affectionate monitors. He looked handsome ; and they saw in him the fairest promises of good,—they saw in him the support, and comfort, and pride of their old age. They besought him to be steadfast in his duties both to God and man ; they besought him to deserve the love which they were willing to give him ; and in them, they said, he should never want a friend. They spoke with tears, and as the seal of the covenant between them, they gave him a new Bible, which they prayed him to study diligently. The youth began to say something

about gratitude ; but his voice trembled, and he was so much affected that he could not go on. The old people gave him their hands, and said that it was not needful ; they understood his feelings, and were sure he would try to deserve their love.

Mrs. Osborne ordered in a very good supper that night ; the apple-pie that had been intended for the morrow's dinner was sent in, and cold beef, and pickle, and roast potatoes with plenty of butter ; and then the smart young apprentice went out to put up the shop-shutters, secretly rejoicing to himself that it was for the last time, inasmuch as the new apprentice would come the next day, and then, as the junior, this would henceforth be his duty.

We have spoken of the Osbornes' love-feast ; the Miss Kendricks also made one for their nephew, which they intended should last for a whole day. They hired a post-chaise, and drove to the pleasant village of Hanbury in Needwood Forest, where lived some old friends of theirs,—a good farmer and his wife. Their nephew walked about the farmer's abundant garden, and ate fresh-gathered apples from the trees, and strolled out by himself into the fields, and came home just in time for dinner. And what a dinner it was, with game, and hot apple-pie, and cream, and syllabubs ! and how merry the little fat farmer was, and his wife too, and how they all ate, and drank, and chatted, and laughed ! Even Aunt Dorothy, she was as merry as anybody.

After dinner, William went out again by himself. He had been rather low-spirited the day before about leaving the aunts that he loved so well and going 'prentice ; but now all dull thoughts seemed driven away. There was something inspiring in the bright,

breezy autumn air, as he strolled along through the old pasture fields, and saw the feathery seeds of the thistle and the great groundsel lifted up and carried over his head by the wind, and the yellow harvest-fields lying amid the deep repose of the woodlands around, and the harvesters piling up the golden shocks of corn on the heavy wain, which moved onward now and then, silently as in a dream. He sat down on the dry slope of the field, with the little shrubby tufts of the rosy-hued rest-harrow at his feet; and thought about his past life and his future. There was a deal of hardship, and sorrow, and trouble in his past life, which was best known to himself and to his Almighty Father; and which he somehow or other shrunk from telling to his kind aunts. There was no use in telling it to them, he thought, and he was right; for it would have done them no good, nor him either. All this now passed in clear review before him; it was like a procession of dark shadows; one after another they went by, and ended in that wet night of May-fair day and his mother's death. But yet that death was not as sad as many things in her life had been; and the boy thought of her grave in the little churchyard of her native town as of her truest resting-place. The only pleasant thought in the past was of his little sister,—the little rosy-cheeked Susan, who was left with the old Methodist grandmother at Truro in Cornwall. Susan was very happy; and above all things liked going with the old woman to chapel, where the people all sang so loud. It was a pleasant thought, that of Susan. Then came his aunts,—Dorothy, blind, and with her hair like snow, yet as cheerful as a lark, and so active! Nobody that saw her at home could ever think her

blind ! And Joanna, who never thought about herself, but was always working or scheming for the good of somebody or other ; who was full of resources for every difficulty, and who suggested good motives for everybody's actions. Never in all this world, poor William thought, were there better women than his aunts ; it would be impossible for him to turn out badly, belonging, as he did, to such good people. William thought of all the pleasure they had given him, of the happy weeks at Matlock, of the collection of minerals they had bought for him, of the new clothes they had given him,—how they were about to put him apprentice to a respectable business, how they had given him a new Bible and such a handsome prayer-book as would make it a pleasure to go to church ; and to wind up all, how they had hired a chaise and brought him out into the country, which he enjoyed so much, just on purpose to make his last day of freedom pleasant. All this he thought of, and then made a little vow with himself that he would be very obedient and good as an apprentice, and be industrious in learning his business ; and then, when he was a man and his aunts were old, that he might be able to do something for them in return. He grew quite in love with his good resolves, and then fell into a charming day-dream of happily-accomplished wishes, from which he was roused by the sound of voices and the creaking of a loaded wagon, which, with its piled-up sheaves, went brushing slowly past the tall hedge-row trees behind him. It was the wagon which, two hours before, he had been watching in the distant fields ; and then the thought first occurred to him that it was time for him to go back to the farm-house. He

ran hastily back, buoyant-hearted with all his good resolutions, and was a little alarmed to see the post-chaise standing at the door. Aunt Dorothy and the farmer's wife were seated on the horse-block, and Joanna and the farmer were looking out from the farm-yard gate; they evidently were looking for him, and then, all at once, for the first time since he had been out, he remembered that his aunt Joanna had warned him not to be long, not above an hour; for they wanted to be at home in good time—how could he have forgotten? Aunt Joanna looked displeased as he came up; he had never seen her look displeased before.

"Well, youngster, we've had a pretty hunt for you," said the farmer, when he reached the gate.

"You must have forgotten what I said," remarked Aunt Joanna.

"Ah, Master William," began the farmer's wife, "I've had a pretty time to pacify your Aunt Dorothy; she thought you must have got drowned, or some mischief."

"I am very sorry," said William; and felt quite humble and submissive, but there was no time or opportunity to say more. He hurried into the parlour to have tea, or coffee, or wine. There was plum-cake, seed-cake, and bread and butter: he must have something—he could eat nothing; he wanted so much to make his peace with everybody. But there was no chance for his getting in a word; his aunts, and the farmer and his wife, were at the chaise-door, in the full energy and activity of leave-taking. There was a basket full of eggs, a bottle of cream, and some fresh butter to go into the chaise; there was a hamper of apples and a couple

of fowls to be stowed away, for all of which the aunts had, first of all, to express astonishment, and then thanks ; and, amid all this, they and their nephew seated themselves in the chaise, and off they drove. William sat silent, and felt unhappy ; his heart trembled at the thought of anger ; he had seen so much of it formerly, and so little of it in the last happy weeks of his life. He wished his aunts would but begin to talk ; but for some time they did not, nor did he.

At length began Aunt Joanna:—"My dear boy," said she, "nothing will be more necessary to you, in life, than strict punctuality. Now, when I had told you to be back soon, what could keep you out so long—when you might see that it was getting late, and the dew was falling. What were you doing?"

"Nothing," said he.

"Nothing!" she repeated. "That is hardly likely—an active boy like you must have been doing something."

William might have said that he had been busy with his thoughts, reviewing the past, and making good resolves for the future. He thought of saying so ; but then it occurred to him that perhaps his aunts would not believe him : he had often been disbelieved in former days, when he had spoken the honest truth. A sullen cloud, like the spirit of those dark former days, fell upon him, and he again replied to his aunt's question, three times repeated, that "he had been doing nothing."

His aunt said no more. Neither she nor Dorothy said much during the rest of the drive homeward ; they were sorry to see him, as they thought, per-

verse and sullen, and not wishing to excite an antagonist spirit, which they fancied they saw in him, they sat silent, and mourned to themselves.

He, on his part, sat between them, dispirited and out of humour. This was the end, then, of all his good resolutions: nobody would give him credit for meaning to do right—that was always the way. His aunts, after all, were as unjust as anybody else. All his good resolutions seemed folly and nonsense; he despised himself for them, and said, in his own heart, that it was no use trying to be good. The dark phantoms which he had called up from the past, and made to pass before him, seemed to have possession of him, and he remembered mournfully the chapter which, the evening before, he had read in his new Bible to his Aunt Dorothy, of him who took seven other spirits unto him worse than himself, and the last state of that man was worse than the first.

So ended *their* Love Feast. But it was a real Love Feast for all that. It was only as if the love-cake had been a little burned in the baking—human endeavours are so seldom perfect.

But now, for six months after this time. Mr. Isaacs went to church every Sunday evening; and, as the Osbornes' pew adjoined that of the Miss Kendricks, and they regularly attended church twice in the day, which Mrs. Osborne did not, because her husband only went in the morning, he mostly walked home with them; and when there was no moon, and the streets therefore as good as dark—for the scanty oil lamps were not worth speaking of—he offered an arm to each sister, which had given rise, in the minds of the two most noto-

rious gossips of the place, Mrs. Morley and Mrs. Proctor, that Mr. Isaacs had a liking for Miss Joanna Kendrick. The report had even reached the ears of the parties themselves; but they seemed so amazingly indifferent about it, that people left them to do as they would, only just speaking of it now and then to keep the idea alive, as a town corporation walks its parish boundaries every seven years or so, to keep their memory from dying out.

"And how does William get on," asked Miss Kendrick, therefore, one Sunday evening, from Mr. Isaacs, on whose arm she leaned.

"Pretty well," said he, in a half-hesitating tone.

"Only pretty well, still!" she returned.

"Why, you see," said Isaacs, "he has not the natural facility of mind that Williams has. That youth has something quite uncommon about him—if he had but stability he might do anything. They now take regular Latin lessons, and that prevents his attending to many other things. Latin is absolutely necessary, and they neither of them understood a word of it."

"What, then," began Joanna, somewhat cheered, "had this clever youth been as much neglected as our poor nephew?"

"He has knowledge enough, and to spare," said Isaacs, "but not exactly of the right kind; he is prodigiously smart and clever, and knows how to make the most of what he has. If he have but stability and good conduct, he may get on wonderfully."

These words sunk deep into the hearts of both aunts. How was it? Was Williams above the average capacity of youths, or was their nephew

below it? They were troubled and discontented. They feared that he did not make all the efforts in his power; perhaps he was careless and inattentive: they must talk with him, and try to rouse up a spirit of emulation in him. Next moment, they were half-disposed to be out of humour with his companion's facility of mind—it is so unpleasant to be outstripped ourselves, or to see those one loves and cares for outstripped.

The next evening, the aunts sent their compliments to Mr. Osborne, and begged that he would let their nephew drink tea with them. He came, and by the gentlest manœuvres in the world, the affectionate aunts began to test the young apprentice's knowledge and skill. How did he like his business?—did he feel that he was getting on at all?—did light begin to break in upon him in any way?—did he feel that he could keep up with Williams? To these questions he replied, that he *did* like his business—that he felt he was getting on—light was breaking in upon him, even in Latin; he had made up a prescription that very day—but as to keeping up with Williams, that was not an easy thing. Williams could make out a prescription above a month ago. Williams was so very clever, he could do anything that he liked; he learned without the least trouble, and had such a memory as never was!

Such was his report of his fellow-apprentice. The aunts listened in silence, and concluded that it must be as Mr. Isaacs had said; Williams was a youth of extraordinary abilities. They sighed over their nephew, who seemed to have but common abilities, and were kinder to him than ever; per-

haps to compensate, if they could, for Nature's supposed unkindness. But long was the lecture that they gave to him on patience and perseverance, which, plodding on together, remove mountains of all kinds, and make even ordinary abilities more availing than the most meteor-like genius.

"Well, and how does Reynolds go on?" again inquired Joanna from Mr. Isaacs, some twelve or eighteen months later.

"Exceedingly well!" was now the reply. "He has stability and perseverance, he will make a good tradesman. He is much more practical than Williams, and thus much more useful." The aunts were well pleased, and now could very well endure to hear their nephew speak well of his fellow-apprentice.

The Osbornes, who had their reasons for being particularly interested in Williams, saw his quick abilities, and his attractive exterior, with uncommon pleasure. As to Mr. Isaacs, he had begun some time ago to have his own thoughts about the smart apprentice, and let him now take his own flights, satisfied to have the more helpful services of Reynolds. Isaacs soon saw, what Mr. Osborne seemed never to find out, that Williams, unstable as water, 'spite of his natural brilliant gifts, would, in the end, excel in nothing. Besides this, there were slight peccadilloes now and then, a missing half-crown or so, which, while he never shut his own eyes to, and always reprov'd in his own way, he never spoke of to Mr. or Mrs. Osborne, unwilling to distress them, as he said to himself, about the son of poor Mrs. Edwards.

Mr. Isaacs had mentioned to Miss Kendricks his suspicion of the youth's parentage; and this suspicion was confirmed to them by an accidental discovery

which their nephew made of what seemed to him the transposed name of his companion, written in his Prayer-book, "William Louis Edwards;" and which, on being shown to him, he immediately tore from the book, saying gaily that it was only a joke. But Williams's secret was safe, both with Miss Kendricks and Mr. Isaacs; and, while the youth did not trouble himself one jot about either the one or the other, he grew tall and good-looking, and, though he wore a shop-apron, had not at all the look of a tradesman about him.

Time went on: the fellow-apprentices agreed remarkably well together. Reynolds plodded on at the quiet drudgery of his business, and Williams took discursive flights of all kinds. Now he was deep among gases, and now he was up in the clouds among the fascinations of the circulating library; now he dipped here and there into the *Materia Medica* and Dr. Thomas's *Practice of Physic*; and now he laboured for three months in learning to play the flute. He certainly had a variety of tastes, if not of talents; and the Osbornes, good people as they were, saw this as something quite remarkable. Mrs. Osborne was fascinated with his handsome figure and gentlemanly bearing, with his amusing conversation, and his variety of little social talents and accomplishments. She contrasted him, in her own mind, with the more homely, unassuming Reynolds. "Poor Miss Kendricks," thought she, "how proud they would be to have a nephew like ours!"

She was the kindest-hearted woman that ever lived, and she never thought thus without being touched with compassion for the good, humbly-

gifted youth, as she thought Reynolds; and many a little kindness and indulgence did he unwittingly owe to this sentiment in her heart towards him.

Time went on, and yet on. The apprentices had each gone on in their own way, and were both nearly nineteen years of age. Williams was now above the middle size, and seemed to have done growing; while Reynolds, on the contrary, seemed as if he had only just begun to grow, and was, as his Aunt Joanna said, "coming on famously." She began to think, after all, that her nephew would, in his way, be every bit as good-looking as Williams. He was stouter built, to be sure, and would never be so tall, but there was such a firm, manly air about him, something so honest and good in his countenance—it was quite a pleasure to look at him!

It was now the middle of winter—a cold, sleety day, when no customers, saving such as wanted physic, turned out of doors. The shop door was shut, the stove was burning cheerily, and the two apprentices were standing together, looking over a play-bill, which had just been thrown in.

Players were come to the town; a theatre was opened, and that night the performances began. "The Beaux' Stratagem:" it was a charming play, said Williams; and read over the list of characters and performers like a school-boy running over a well-practised lesson. There was nothing in this world that he enjoyed like the theatre; to see a play well acted was the finest thing in the world—the next best thing was to see one badly acted. Oh, a tragedy acted by strolling players, there was something quite racy about it! He declared that he should be a great patron of the theatre. He

would take care, he said, and get Mr. Osborne's consent to their going.

There was no difficulty about that. Mr. Osborne was the most indulgent of masters; and the two young men set off arm-in-arm, in the highest spirits, intending to be very critical, and yet very much amused.

A great club-room at one of the inns had been converted into a very pretty little theatre, which was well lighted, and tolerably decorated. Neither boxes, pit, nor gallery had one seat to spare; the players evidently had taken the little town at the right moment. Williams, however, was at first amazingly critical; found unmeasured fault, and ridiculed everything. He had seen, he said, in his time, the finest theatres in London, and he knew what good acting was, too. The acting, however, pleased him; above all things, the acting of Miss Jessie Bannerman, who performed the character of Dorinda. He declared that she was a goddess, an angel; so young, not above sixteen; so divinely beautiful! she was equal to any actress in genteel comedy that he had ever seen. He must know something about her! He was very fond of players, he said; loved, of all things, to have the *entrée* of the green-room; had a vast fancy for acting himself; and ended by protesting that he was deeply in love with that girl, and would make her acquaintance, or know the reason why.

CHAPTER IV.

JESSIE'S ACQUAINTANCE MADE.

WE must now pay a visit to the house of a clog and patten-maker, and, without using any ceremony, enter the little parlour, which is but very humbly furnished, with its home-made listing carpet hardly covering its brick floor, and its furniture of blue and white check. In the middle of the room stands a round table, covered with a coarse huckaback tablecloth, on which plates, knives and forks, and an earthenware salt-cellar, with bread and cheese, give intimation that supper is at hand. The homely furniture, however, did not cause a moment's uneasiness to the persons who were there, and whom we may as well introduce to the reader. First of all, a little old woman, in a night-cap not remarkably clean, and a pink bed-gown, who sat bending over the little fire-place set in Dutch tile, cooking on the fire a quantity of tripe, in a saucepan rather too small for the purpose, while within the fender stood dishes and plates to warm. This old woman, known in the theatrical corps as Mrs. Bellamy, though she never acted, seemed so absorbed by her occupation as to take no notice whatever of a young couple who sat together, in very amicable proximity, on the sofa. These were Jessie Bannerman, the fair *prima donna* of the company, and our acquaintance, Williams, who was now paying by no means his first visit to the inmates of the patten-maker's parlour. Williams was very handsomely dressed in his Sunday clothes, for it was Sunday evening; whilst the young lady, a

slight, delicate young creature, was decidedly *en déshabillé*, a costume which, although it bore unequivocal marks of having been supplied by a scanty purse, was not unbecoming to her remarkably interesting appearance.

The youth held both her hands in his, and gazed with almost devotion into her face. She seemed to have been weeping, but a faint smile, like April sunshine, passed at that moment over her face, and she replied, in answer to some remark of his, "Oh, no, the dear old creature, she is very deaf; she hears nothing we say, and if she did, she would not interrupt us. Ah, she is a good creature!" exclaimed she, snatching away her hands from their confinement; and starting up to the old woman's side, she put them on her shoulder, and spoke in her ear, but not loudly, "I have been telling him how good you are to me, and how much I love you," added she, and kissed the old woman's wrinkled cheek. The old woman understood the action, if not the words, and gave several little, short nods, without turning her head, or apparently lifting her eyes from the saucepan.

The young girl sat down again, and continued, "If it were not for her, my life would be worse than that of a galley-slave. She is not as poor as she seems, and has managed to make herself of consequence to the company; and Mr. Maxwell, the manager, consults her in everything. He hates her, however, for all that, and they quarrel dreadfully."

Whilst these few words passed, the old woman had dished her tripe, which she covered up with a basin, and set within the fender, while she went out

for ale in a small jug. When she returned, and showed what her errand had been, the youth started up, exclaiming against his own forgetfulness, and took from the pocket of his great-coat, which he had laid upon the floor, two bottles of wine, which he said he had brought for them, and which he believed would prove good. The old and the young lady both expressed surprise, and then they all three sat down to supper with the most apparent cordiality. The old woman's tripe was excellent, and well cooked, and Williams's wine was as good as need be drunk; but here, before it could be drunk, there occurred a little difficulty. The wine-glasses of the patten-maker's wife were locked up in a corner-cupboard of this room; she would not entrust her keys to her lodgers, nor would they admit her into the room, lest she should recognise Mr. Osborne's apprentice, whom she well knew, in the young visitor who usually came in so muffled up and disguised that he passed for one of the players themselves. Two little china cups, therefore, that stood on the mantel-piece as ornaments, were substituted instead; the old woman having one to herself, and Jessie and her lover—for lover he was—the other between them. After supper, which all three had seemed greatly to enjoy, the old woman swept up the hearth, cleared away the supper-things, and sticking the corks into the bottles, lest, as she said, such good wine should spoil, seated herself in a low-armed chair, and, throwing her apron over her face, lay back as if to sleep; whilst Jessie and the young man resumed their seats on the sofa, and shortly afterwards fell into deep conversation.

"And must I tell you all?" asked she.

"All, every incident from your earliest memory," returned he, passionately. "Whatever concerns you, interests me."

Jessie heaved a deep sigh, and was silent for a few moments.

"I have heard *her* say," at length she began, looking towards the old woman in the chair opposite, "that my mother was the most beautiful of women, and perhaps, also, the most unfortunate. She was the daughter of a village schoolmaster, a man possessed of some little property; and *she*," said she, again indicating the old woman opposite, "was, I fancy, his wife, and consequently is my grandmother; but that she never will confess, although I have besought her on my knees. My mother was loved, or rather courted, by a rich gentleman. She loved him—oh, too well: he deserted her, and her father, who was a very severe, although in his way a very religious man, never would forgive her error. He turned her, one wild autumn night, out of doors. It thundered and lightened, and was a night on which to lose one's senses, or else to do some horrid deed. Her mother prayed the father to relent, and to open the door; for she stayed wandering about the house till long after midnight, begging and praying that he would not be so hard-hearted and so cruel—but it was all in vain! He was one of those men who think that it was the woman only who fell; he thought that the man was a superior being, whose place in creation was to domineer over woman, and punish her, and subject her as much as he could. It was a sort of virtue in his eyes, and so he

neither would listen to the prayers of his wife nor daughter."

"What a monster he was!" exclaimed Williams, in a very audible voice.

The old woman put her apron from her head, and said sharply to him, "It is fine talking, young man! but you are all tyrants by nature—every one of you—for all you look so mild and gentle! Every one of you!" added she, again throwing her apron over her head.

"I thought that she was deaf!" exclaimed Williams, amazed, and almost terrified.

"And so she is," returned Jessie, "but you are so violent."

"Well, go on," said he; "your story affects me."

"My grandfather," continued she, "would not go to bed till long after my mother's voice had ceased outside, and then he took the key of the house-door and put it under his pillow, to prevent his wife going out. She was very much afraid of her husband, so she waited till she heard him snoring in bed, and then she got out at the kitchen-window; but nowhere could she find her daughter. She wandered about all day, and went into the neighbours' barns, and up and down the river-side; but she found no traces, nor had anybody in the village seen her. Towards evening, however, she met a waggoner coming with his team towards the village, who had been out with barley to a neighbouring town; and from him she learnt that, about three o'clock in the morning, he had overtaken a young woman, who was walking alone on the road, and who seemed very much distressed. She begged him, he said, to give her a lift in his wagon, which he did; he had also

given her part of the refreshment which he had with him for himself, and had spoken a good word for her to the woman of the house where he put up; but that, after she left his wagon, which was at the town's end, he had seen no more of her, nor could he tell what it was her intention to do, or where to go. My grandmother was so affected by this mark of kindness, especially, as she said, in a man, that she thought within herself, what could she give him in return. She felt in her pocket, but money she had none, excepting a crooked Queen Anne's sixpence with a hole through it, which she had kept many years. This she gave to him, and begged of him to keep for her sake; and for her sake, also, to be kind to poor women whenever he met with them, and to take her blessing for the kindness he had shown her daughter. Instead of going home, she at once turned herself round, and walked through the night back to the town, where she arrived at daybreak. The woman of the public-house could give no information respecting her daughter, so at night she set off home again."

"She spent that day, and the next, and the next after that," said the old woman rapidly, interrupting her, and throwing the apron from her face, and sitting up in the chair; "three whole days she spent in searching for her daughter! It was a large town, and a wicked town, and nothing but sin, and misery, and sorrow, did she meet with everywhere, wherever she sought for her poor outcast! But she did not find her! Many a fair young creature she saw, as desolate as her own child; but her own child she found not, and, with a bleeding, downcast heart, and a weary body, she retraced her

steps homeward. Her husband, as she came back, sat among the little boys in the school just as if nothing had happened, and heard them read about Mary Magdalene, in the Bible, that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ himself had mercy on, yet he never had pity on his own flesh and blood! If I were to tell you," continued she, "of the tears, and the heart-aches, and the prayers of that mother, all in secret between her Maker and herself, you, that are young, would maybe not believe me, so I pass them all over. In a winter or two afterwards, her husband got a rheumatic fever, and she then had to wait on him night and day: he was as helpless as a child, and was cross, and out of humour with her, and with himself, too. She had a weary life of it. The parson came to see him, and preachers of all sorts, from far and near; for he was reckoned a religious man; and being parish schoolmaster, and a man of property besides, folks thought much of him, and his wife got them to talk to him of his daughter, now that he was sick and helpless, and turn his heart towards her, if they could. But he was as hard as iron, and he would not even have her mentioned in his prayers. Well, it pleased God to afflict him in many ways, and he had fits and spasms, and was speechless for months.

" 'Stephen,' said his wife to him, one night, 'God is punishing you for your hardness to poor Mary. You deserve it! and I hope he will never take his hand off you till you've forgiven her, and acted as a Christian should do!'

" He had not spoken for months and months, and you may think what was her surprise when he lifts himself slowly up in bed, and fixing his hollow

eyes on her, says, 'He *has* punished me—punished me severely. I forgive her, and may God Almighty forgive us both!' With these words he dropped back on the pillow, and his poor wife was so overcome by what she heard, all so unexpectedly, that she sank down as if she had been smitten, and when she had strength to rise again—he was a corpse! A bitter feeling now came over her towards herself: she had been angry with him—she had done her duty to him only as duty, not as love. What would she not have given then for one week, one hour, of his past life! Ah, children, children!" said she, addressing the two before her, "never grieve those you love; never lose an opportunity of doing a kindness to those you love; never give way to bitterness and hardness, else you will lay up a punishment for yourselves which will pursue you as with a whip of scorpions!"

A silence of a few minutes ensued. Jessie had thrown herself back in a corner of the sofa, and Williams sat staring at the old woman, who now, as if with all her faculties awake, continued:—

"Some indistinct rumour reached the mother, some time after her husband's death, that her daughter was in London; so she turned all the little property that was left into money, and to London she went. She went to London to find her daughter. And how was her daughter to be found among the thousands of other women's daughters, that were outcasts in society—women with beauty, talents, affections, all trampled under foot, viler than the very mud of the streets! She went out on the evenings of summer days, when the birds of heaven were singing, and the dew lay as pure as

angels' thoughts on the grassy fields ; and what did she meet ? Women that the rich and pampered daughters of untempted virtue loathed ; but she met not with her daughter. She went out on cold, desolate, pinching nights of winter, when happy families sat round happy hearths—fathers, and mothers, and little children, and blessed God that they lived in a Christian land, where all misery was cared for ; and what did she still meet ? Poor, unfortunate women again—creatures that God had made a little lower than the angels ; for what ? To be the prey of the vilest passions of man ; to be despised, scorned, pointed at, trampled on ; to be miserable and outcast ! These she saw, winter and summer, alike ; these, beauty and misery, going hand-in-hand down to the pit ! Yes, young man," said she, lifting up an admonitory finger, "such as you it is that do this work of death and the devil ! and think not that you shall come here, paying your flattering, false attentions to that old woman's grand-daughter unwatched and unprevented !"

"Upon my soul," said the young man, quite taken by surprise, "I am sincere as the very sun in heaven ! Only, you see, as yet, I am in trammels ; I am not my own master."

"Enough ! enough !" said the old woman. "But I have not yet done. You asked for Jessie's history, and we are not yet come to it. I had been out one night to get a bit of butcher's-meat ; I had not had a bit for months, and somehow or other the fancy took me to have a bit ; so I went out that Saturday night, and had not gone far, before I was stopped by a crowd at the door of a house, where they said that a man was ill-using a woman. 'It's

only his wife !' said somebody near me ; just as if he had said, it's only his dog. These were things that I felt in my very soul ; so I rushed into the house, just as the brutal husband, mad with liquor and cruelty, and with blood upon his clothes, threw himself out of the door into the middle of the crowd, which, ' spite of the attempts to seize upon him, he struck off right and left, and made his escape. A crowd of people beside me had rushed into the house, and up-stairs where the woman was, whose blood we met, trickling down-stairs, before we reached the top. She was bleeding from face, and neck, and arms, where she had many great gashes. She looked as if she were already dead, and a little child, not six months old, lay crying on the miserable bed beside her. The sight of the woman caused a cry of indignation and horror in the people, and half of them turned back to overtake and secure the man whom they now regarded as a murderer. From a feeling of pity which wrung my very heart, I took up the child in my arms ; it looked into my face, and smiled ! It was *she* ! " said the old woman, pointing to Jessie, who now, pale and excited, was weeping again.

" They took the woman to the hospital," continued she. " She was one of a travelling company of comedians and horse-riders ; her husband and she acted the principal parts : she had been, and still was, very beautiful. She was the school-master's daughter — the daughter of that mother who had sought her so long and so wearily ! She did not die. There were two children : the infant, and a girl of seven years old, a young creature that played night after night, and was the great attrac-

tion of the company. She was ill, and it had been about her acting that the parents had quarrelled that night. She was a wonderful child. Oh, why are such gifts as hers given, when they can lead but to misery and ruin! The little Fanny danced on the tight-rope night after night, and performed the most wonderful feats of horsemanship as the Flying Circassian; and acted and sung to the delight of crowds of thoughtless, admiring people. She played, and danced, and rode, and grew weaker and weaker day by day; but there was no pity either for her or the infant, which, as soon as it could walk, was made to ride and dance, and which promised to be as great a prodigy as her sister. When the mother was dead, I joined myself to the company. The father hated me, but he could not get rid of me. I stayed, because there was no law to take them forcibly from the father. After I had been with the company some years, things mended. All were not as bad as he; poor they all were, but many of them had kind hearts, and there were those with us who would take our parts; and besides, as Fanny's health mended under my care, the father no longer tried to make my life intolerable; besides which, a cold which I took made me deaf, so that I could not hear him. He married again, and then I took the children to myself; the travelling life was not unpleasant to me, and Fanny was a very angel."

"And where is Fanny?" asked Williams. The old woman made no reply.

Jessie took the handkerchief from her face, and laying her hand on his arm, said solemnly, "Fanny is dead!"

He looked shocked, and she continued, "Had

you known Fanny, you would never have loved me. I am no more to be compared to her, than the moon to the sun. She was nineteen when she died; I was then twelve. *She*," said she, pointing to the old woman, "had much more reason to love Fanny than me. She was much handsomer than me, and was so witty and merry! Ill as she was, it never cast her down; and her laugh! Oh, I remember it now! I never heard a laugh like it—so sweet, so joyous, so musical! My father used to say that her laugh would make her fortune; but she took cold one night at the theatre, and in three days she died! They think of making another Fanny of me," said she; "but it will not do. My father is disappointed in me. I am not as brilliant as my sister. My life is not happy—not at all happy," said she, clasping her hands, and bursting into a passion of tears.

"Adorable girl!" said Williams, quite beside himself with love and pity, and throwing himself on one knee before her. "My whole life shall be devoted to making your life happy!"

The fair Jessie bowed her face, and wept upon his shoulder.

"Hey-day!" said the old woman, starting up from her chair, "what nonsense is all this! I know what it means when men talk of life-long devotion. And what are *you*, young man? Can *you* rescue her from the life of misery that lies before her?"

"I am one who love her better than life," said Williams, starting to his feet, and facing the old woman with quite a theatrical air. "I love her, and, were I but free, I would marry her to-morrow."

"Fine talking!" said the old woman, with a

sneer; "*if I were but free!* that is always the way! *If I were but free, indeed!* Why, when you are free, your mind will have changed. Then, then! ah, I know you men! You are a pack of designing, selfish knaves, and I'll have none of you! I'll take care of Jessie Bannerman, if she cannot take care of herself; and so you had better take your leave, for the decent people at your house must have been in bed these two or three hours."

"By Jove, and so they will!" exclaimed Williams, looking at his watch, and horrified to see that it was past two o'clock.

"I shall never get in to-night," said he, almost dolefully. "For Heaven's sake let me sleep where I am. I will lie on the sofa, or anywhere, and early in the morning I will be gone."

The old woman was again deaf; and it was only by his forcibly taking possession of the sofa, that she seemed to understand him. Jessie laughed as merrily and as musically, Williams thought, as Fanny could have done, and applauded the idea. But the old woman was inexorable, and turned him literally out of doors.

Well was it for him that, in that quiet town, every soul, excepting the watchman, was in bed. The night was fine and starlight, and avoiding the watchman, who made himself perceptible by his cry, he walked through the town right into the country, which was not inconvenient to him, as he had excused his yesterday's absence on the plea of spending the afternoon with some friends in the country; and the next morning he entered Mr. Osborne's parlour just as they were about to sit down to breakfast, nobody suspecting one word of the real truth.

CHAPTER V.

A SPOKE IN THE WHEEL.

MY readers may imagine how confusing must have been all the inquiries which assailed the young man from Mrs. Osborne during breakfast. "Well, and how were the Yates's? Is he better? and is John come from Birmingham? And what news have they from Mrs. Benjamin? Are the children better? And has Jenny had the measles?"

Williams was not a young man to be easily dumb-founded; his replies really were all so straightforward, that nobody could have had the slightest suspicion of all not being quite straightforward regarding them. All this, however, was nothing to the difficulty he found after breakfast, when he was told to assist in the putting up of a large order for a country-shop. What room had he in his mind for 6 lbs. of yellow ochre, and 2 lbs. of camomile flowers, and glue, and lamp-black, and syrup of squills, and opium?

"What, are not those things put up yet?" asked Mr. Osborne, looking down into the lower warehouse, as he saw Williams by lamplight, towards dinner-time, weighing out whitening, which he knew came fourth in a list of seven-and-twenty articles. No, indeed! they were not put up. Williams had thought of nothing all the morning but the fair Jessie, and her sad family history, and her deaf old grandmother, who, after all, was not deaf. He went over the history, incident by incident, and asked himself many questions. Who, then, was Jessie's father? Was it that Mr. Maxwell, the manager, with whom

she had said that the old woman often quarrelled? and if so, why was she called Bannerman? Was that her mother's name? and if so, why, then, was the old woman called Bellamy? He could not understand these things. One thing, however, he could very well understand, and that was, that he was desperately in love; should never love anybody else as long as he lived; and if he were but out of his time would marry her instantly, even if he had to starve all the rest of his life for it.

What an awkward thing it is for a young man violently in love, and a little headstrong into the bargain, not to be out of his time—not to be at liberty to do just as he likes! He grew quite desperate there, down among the whitening casks and the hogsheds of oil and vinegar. He remembered her tears, and that she had declared herself to be unhappy; and that she had to display all her charms and her powers of pleasing every night to worthless crowds, whilst he was dying but for one glance of hers. And then, how did he know but that some young fellow who was “out of his time,” and his own master, might not fall in love with her, and carry her off at once! What so likely? He then laid a thousand impossible plans, which at the moment he vowed to execute. He would join the company, and travel with her. He would run off with her, and get married; his uncle and aunt would be angry, he knew, but in the end they would forgive him. Jessie should throw herself at their feet; they could never withstand her beauty and her tears. In the midst of this scene he was woken to reality and a dinner of boiled beef and turnips. Poor Williams! he had no appetite, and

he looked as woe-begone as it was possible for any young apprentice to look who was over head and ears in love. He was not well, he said ; he was, to use the words of a country swain in love, "hot and dry, like, with a pain in his side, like ;" and he prescribed for himself a walk in the fresh air, which Mr. Osborne freely permitted to him, deputing Reynolds to finish his work below.

Williams dressed himself with great care, and putting on his great-coat, made the best of his way to the clog and patten-maker's, not failing to see, as he passed along the streets, on every blank wall and every projecting house-corner, the name of his fair one in the play-bills for the night, "To be performed this evening, the Fair Quaker of Deal, the part of the Fair Quaker, by Miss Jessie Bannerman." Jessie was the attraction of the company—the whole town acknowledged it. The sight of her name added to his impatience ; he reached the house, and thinking neither of the patten-maker nor his wife, rushed through the kitchen, where they sat at tea, without any precaution of concealment, and knocking hurriedly at the parlour-door, entered without waiting for permission from within.

"Why, that's Osborne's smart apprentice, for sure," exclaimed the patten-maker's wife ; "so, he's smitten, is he, with that young player-wench ?"

"Why, how many young chaps are there after her ?" asked her husband.

"Half-a-score," said the wife, "at least ;" and began counting them on her fingers.

Williams's entrance produced quite a sensation among the three persons in the room. The old woman, who sat with her spectacles on, sewing

white muslin cuffs into the slate-coloured stuff gown which was evidently to be the dress of the Fair Quaker of Deal, knocked down an old pasteboard box which held her store of sewing materials. Jessie, who stood *en déshabillé*, as yesterday, with her little Quaker's cap in her hand, turned first red and then pale at the sight of him; and a tall young man, of perhaps two-and-twenty, who was at that moment presenting her with a bouquet of splendid greenhouse flowers, started back a step or two, as if a snake had stung him, and then stood, with the flowers in his hand, and a look of defiance in his eye, at the unexpected rival, whom the lady might be supposed to favour from her changing colour. A glance told all this; and Williams, on his part, looked as much taken by surprise as any of them. Here had he flown on the wings of love and impatience only to find a rival—a favoured rival his jealousy whispered, and that in the handsome person of Tom Bassett, a young man of family—an articled clerk of the first lawyer in the place;—he was in love with her too—it was death and destruction!

“Shall you see me to-night as the Fair Quaker?” asked Jessie, with one of her sweetest smiles.

“Most certainly I shall,” said Williams, who, in the face of his rival, felt that it must be so.

She showed him the cap, and pointed to the dress which the old woman was engaged upon for the character; and while he turned to speak to the old woman, who seemed now deader than ever, Tom Bassett again presented his flowers, which were graciously accepted. Williams did not wait for the old woman's answer, but was, the same moment, at Jessie's side again, looking daggers at the free-and-

easy young lawyer. With the air of a queen, Jessie motioned the two to be seated. Bassett laughed and talked with the most provoking ease and confidence. In his eyes, evidently, Williams was a rival not worth noticing. Jessie laughed at his jokes, and seemed not to trouble herself about the other. It was mortifying, it was provoking, it was enough to make a saint swear, thought Williams. "Here I sit," thought he to himself, "like a fool, without a word to say for myself!" If he *were* to speak, he knew that his voice would betray his feelings—he wished his rival at the devil. We beg our readers' pardon, but it is truth; he did so, and he wished more than that—that he could challenge him, and put a bullet through his body. It was a most uncomfortable time to him. He called Bassett an ass—a stupid, conceited ass—in his own mind; and perhaps he might have been excited to call him so to his face, if the old woman, who had finished her work, had not got up, and shaking out the gown, said it was now ready, and as it was five o'clock, the gentlemen had better both take their departure. "Did they hear?" she repeated, as if she thought them as deaf as herself.

They both rose, and Jessie offering a hand to each at the same moment, curtsied them a graceful adieu.

"I *must* say a word to you," whispered Williams, as Bassett left the room.

"To-night, after the play. I do not act in the after-piece," said she, hurriedly, and closed the door upon him. But that was enough; he wanted no more; he felt as if wings had at once sprung from his shoulders.

The patten-maker sold tickets for the play, and the words that he heard after the parlour-door had shut were, "ten box-tickets for to-night."

The patten-maker counted out the tickets, and Bassett, who had drawn forth a handsome scarlet purse with gold rings from his pocket, laid down a guinea, and without waiting for the change, drew on his gloves, and pocketed his purse and the tickets.

"Ten box-tickets," said Williams to the patten-maker, who looked as if he had expected it; and thinking of a bootmaker's bill, for the payment of which he had received money from his aunt, drew forth a very modest little brown purse, which Miss Dorothy Kendrick had netted for him, and paid for his tickets with a half-guinea, a half-crown, five shillings, and four sixpences; the coin looked quite beggarly, and the purse was left so empty that the rings slid off as he put it again into his pocket. But he was not going to trouble himself just then on that subject. Tom Bassett also stood on the door-step as he went out, and drawing forth an eye-glass, contemptuously surveyed him from head to foot. Eye-glasses, in those days, were not as common as now; and Williams, though he felt stung, as it were, from head to heel, hummed, with a gallant, careless toss of the head, one of Jessie's favourite airs; and recollecting how inconvenient any public quarrel would be, or, in fact, any quarrel at all, as it would bring more than he liked to the knowledge of his uncle, turned upon his heel and walked down the street.

Now came the consideration respecting the ten tickets, and he almost thought himself a fool for having bought more than one for himself. What

was he now to do with them ? He walked across the fields towards the Dove-Bridge, and came to the very wise conclusion, that two of them he would keep, and the other eight, wrapping neatly in paper, he would drop, on his return, in the market-place, where they would be sure to be found. As to the two that he retained, he would boldly confess the having purchased them, and ask permission for Reynolds and himself to go to the theatre that night. He did as he had resolved ; and, after just about as much reproof as he expected from Mr. and Mrs. Osborne, tea was hastened, and, grateful to his companion for having obtained for him this unexpected pleasure, Reynolds ran up-stairs to prepare his toilet.

The little theatre was crowded, and the fair Jessie was received most enthusiastically. Williams thought her lovelier than ever in her quiet Quaker costume. "All the town is in love with her," said he to his companion ; "and is she not an angel ?"

It was quite a brilliant night. The very gentry of the town were there ; and there, seated between the two daughters of the lawyer, sat Tom Bassett. Williams was delighted, for with these two young ladies he was quite secure for the night.

"And now, my dear, good fellow," whispered Williams to his companion, just before the curtain fell, "you must stand my friend. You will ; promise me you will !" said he, laying his hand on his arm, and looking quite agitated. "I am in love with Miss Bannerman ; she knows it ; she loves me, too, and has promised me a little interview this evening. She is a very angel : she is a good girl, I assure you ! I love her as my life, and I am sure you will be my

friend. She does not act again to-night," continued he, rapidly, and not allowing Reynolds time to speak, "but you will stay the after-piece—it is the most amusing thing in the world; and if I am not at home by the time you are, don't let anybody miss me—and I'll do as much for you any time!"

"But, Williams," began he. Williams, however, did not wait to hear. The curtain fell, and he was gone.

He knew perfectly the back-entrance by which Jessie would leave the theatre; and there, at the very moment of time, stood she, wrapped in a cloak, and attended by the old woman with a lighted lantern. 'Spite of the lawyer's daughters, there also was Bassett, making a thousand protestations of regret and chagrin at not being able to accompany her.

"She wants no escort," said Williams, rendered bold by his good fortune; "I shall have that happiness," and taking Jessie's little hand, which he drew within his arm, he walked off triumphantly.

"The jackanapes! the conceited jackanapes!" exclaimed Bassett; but not imagining for a moment that Jessie would give a druggist's apprentice the preference over him, he went back to the theatre laughing to himself at the youth's "ignorant conceit."

Williams walked off triumphantly with Jessie on his arm, and the little old woman trudged beside them with her lantern; but scarcely had they gone ten yards when they were stopped by a man who put a small paper into their hands.

What had they here? They stopped; and, by the light of the lantern, read the words, printed in great, black, awful-looking letters, "THE DOORS OF THE PLAY-HOUSE LEAD TO HELL!"

"It's the parson's doing!" said Williams, shocked at what he had read aloud, and crumpling it in his hand, threw it from him. "He is a narrow-souled, bigoted, methodistical fellow, who sets his face against every kind of pleasure! It is just like him!"

This little incident, however, seemed to throw no gloom on him, after the first moment; so, leaving them to their full enjoyment, we will return to Reynolds, who was thrown, by his companion's sudden desertion, into a state of the most complete perplexity. Reynolds was a good-hearted fellow; he always looked upon Williams as much older in worldly experience than he was; he, himself, was a child in comparison of him, a mere apprentice; whilst the other had been, as it were, "out of his time" this many and many a day. He had long known that Williams would never excel in his business; he had neglected the study of every branch of it ever since the first glow of novelty was worn off. He was frank in his confession about it; he hated business, and would never do any more than he was obliged; yet the impulses of his nature were often good and kind; he knew his own weaknesses and acknowledged them, and was quite willing that Reynolds should stand a long way before him in the good opinion of Mr. Isaacs. Reynolds really liked him, and had so constantly and for so long done his work, and hidden all his misdemeanors, and made up for his shortcomings, that Williams had the fullest confidence that he would befriend him also in this instance. Betray him he never would; and he would smuggle him, safely and unseen, into the house, if he sate up the whole night for it. Yes; that was all true. But for all that, Reynolds was not at all pleased with the

position he was now placed in. This, then, was what he had been brought for; he had been made a cat's-paw of, and he felt vexed; besides this, he was very honourable and religious in his principles and notions; and the hurried and candid confession of his companion had utterly shocked and confounded him. For his part, he would as soon have thought of falling in love with his grandmother as with a *player*—for so he called her, not “actress,” as Williams did, let her be as beautiful as she might: and then to make appointments with her at night;—there was something quite frightful to him in it. And all at once the whole scene before him lost its attraction. It was a wicked place! that which they had just seen performed was low and disgusting—a burlesque, a coarse caricature! He was offended—ashamed—angry with himself for having been amused;—and now this “after-piece” was worse and worse—there was not even the beauty of Jessie Bannerman to set it off; the women were painted, gaudy creatures; the men fit associates for them.

It was in this spirit that Reynolds sat out the “after-piece.”

When the company dispersed from the theatre, there was not *one* man but *three* who distributed their little printed papers. Everybody had one, some two or three; and everybody, on reading them, exclaimed—“‘This is Mr Goodman’s doing;” or “‘This is the parson’s doing;” or “‘We shall have a sermon against the players on Sunday.”

And all these exclamations were right. There was a sermon against them on Sunday, and a severe one, too; and not alone against players and play-houses, but against all playgoers, also. But before

Sunday, the clergyman, who was one of the best of men, although one of the most rigid, called on the Osbornes, as he had been doing for some days on his delinquent flock, to remonstrate with so respectable a man, and so good a church-goer as Mr Osborne, on allowing his apprentices to frequent places of such awful wickedness as theatres !

Williams was faint with apprehension lest the clergyman knew also of his passion and his acquaintance with the fair Jessie ; the patten-maker and his wife knew of it ; Tom Bassett knew of it ; oh, it must come out ! He felt quite ill, and went into the upper warehouse, looking like anything but a bold lover, where he sat down on a resin-tub, waiting for the judgment which he feared might be at hand.

Mr. Osborne was a very good, kind-hearted man, good to the poor, and charitable in the gospel-sense of the word to all mankind. He thought players bad, low people ; but, for his part, he saw no use in commencing a crusade against them. We should never exterminate them, they would exist ' spite of us ; and people, he said, would go to theatres to be amused. People must be amused ; he saw no harm in it at all. He had had some thoughts, he said, of going himself ; and as to his apprentices—why, if his young men were good and steady, and attended to their business, he thought it only right now and then to give them a bit of pleasure. He had always done so ; he had been forty years in business ; had had about seven-and-twenty apprentices, all of whom, for what he knew, had turned out well. He thought that was a proof that his system was not a very bad one ; and with all respect for the clergyman, whom

nobody respected more than he did, he must still be allowed to pursue his own course.

The clergyman used his strongest arguments; he knew nothing as yet of Williams's affairs, or he would have had a famous argument in his hand; but still Mr. Osborne adhered to the very last to his own opinions—perhaps even went a little beyond them in opposition to what seemed the ultra opinions of the other.

All this went on in the parlour, and Mr. Isaacs and a customer, who was of the clergyman's way of thinking, discussed the subject in the shop, whilst Reynolds went on with his weighing and labelling and pill-making, and thinking that they were right, every word they said. He did believe all players, men, women, and children, to be a wicked, low, dissolute, unprincipled set of people, and it was not his intention ever to go near them again.

Next morning, before church, came Miss Joanna Kendrick to beg that her nephew might go to church. She was warmer even than the clergyman had been, and really censured Mr. Osborne for letting his young men go to the play-house. If *she* had been asked, she said, she should have prevented it, at least as far as her nephew was concerned. Mr. Osborne could do just as he liked with regard to the other.

Mr. Osborne felt quite vexed—for the first time in his life vexed with Miss Kendrick. He repeated to her what he had said to the clergyman about his forty years' experience in business and the management of apprentices; but it was quite in another tone of voice, and Miss Kendrick was hurt. She replied warnily, and so did he; and really these two excel-

lent people might have quite come to a quarrel had not a note at that moment, from a physician, required Mr. Osborne's particular attention.

This note was an awkward affair, indeed ; such a thing as this had never occurred before in the whole forty years of Mr. Osborne's practice. He started up, and, with the note in his hand, went into the back-room, which was appropriated to Mr. Isaacs and the young men.

"Who made up that prescription of Dr. Chawner's, yesterday?" asked he.

Mr. Isaacs considered for a moment, and then replied that Williams had done it.

Williams was sitting there reading a volume of Massinger's plays, which he had borrowed from Anderson, one of the actors ; he started, and looked frightened. "Why, what of the prescription?" he asked.

"Did you make that up yesterday?" asked Mr. Osborne, in an angry tone.

"I did, sir," he returned, submissively.

"And how came you, then, to put in 40 drops tinctura opii and 6 tinctura scillæ, instead of 6 drops tinctura opii and 40 tinctura scillæ?"

Williams could not tell, unless he had mistaken it.

Mr. Osborne swore—yes, actually on a Sunday morning. Williams's answer had provoked him to it. "Mistaken a physician's prescription! What the deuce did he mean by mistaking a physician's prescription, or anything else! He would be poisoning people some of these days; what had he learnt his business for," &c., &c.

Never had Mr. Osborne, in all his forty years' practice, been so angry as then. It was the first

time in his life that ever a mistake had been made at his counter in a physician's prescription.

Williams knew well enough the cause of his blunder—he knew where his thoughts had been when he made up the prescription. He had not a word to say for himself.

Mr. Isaacs, almost as vexed as Mr. Osborne, made up the prescription, vowing with himself that he never would put another into Williams's hands. Mr. Osborne wrote the best apology he could to the physician, and Williams sat all the morning reading Massinger's plays.

CHAPTER VI.

DEEPER AND DEEPER.

THE whole town talked of nothing but the players. One half the inhabitants sided with the clergyman, the other half with Mr. Maxwell's company. The theatrical party was headed by the family of the lawyer with whom was Tom Bassett; and this same lawyer not only bespoke a play, but talked of giving a supper to the principal performers.

The lawyer's daughters thought of nothing but private theatricals; and Tom Bassett, who was hand and glove with half the theatrical staff, as well as desperately in love with the prima donna, borrowed the actors' own copies of plays, and was *au fait* in all that appertained to theatrical life.

On the other hand, among the persons most active on the side of the clergyman, were the good Miss Kendricks. It was as good as a sermon to hear Miss Joanna talk; she really was more effective than

the clergyman, because she was less violent. He talked of the theatre as the "devil's house," called theatricals the "work of hell," and denounced all such as, after thus being warned, wilfully aided and abetted them, "as heirs of damnation." It was quite awful to hear him talk. Miss Joanna, on the contrary, spoke in love and tenderness, pitied the "poor, benighted creatures," the players; who, she said, were more to be lamented over than pagan Hottentots, and she besought people, for the love of their own souls, not to give them encouragement; nor would she at all go the length that the clergyman did, in saying that it would be a good thing if every copy of Shakspeare had been burned publicly by the hand of the hangman. No, Miss Joanna, in all her zeal, talked like a tender-hearted Christian, and people listened to her. But, spite of all that she said, and spite of all the clergyman thundered forth, the little theatre was crowded night after night.

Mr. Maxwell, the red-faced manager, said that he liked nothing so well as the opposition of a parson; it always did the house good, and he did not know whether he should not introduce Mr. Goodman some night on the stage.

All this time the rivalry between Tom Bassett and our apprentice went on as hotly as ever. Each thought himself the favoured lover, yet still each hated and feared the other. Between these two young men, however, there was one great difference. Bassett had plenty of money, Williams had none. All that he had of his own had long been gone; the pound that had been given to him by his aunt to pay the poor bootmaker had been spent in tickets, as we know. He had borrowed since then every farthing

of money from Reynolds, and which, being but a scanty allowance, was always hoarded and husbanded with the greatest economy. From Mr. Isaacs he dared not borrow ; nor, just then, when the memory of his blunder was fresh in his mind, durst he ask money from his uncle. There was, however, the cash in the shop-safe. His uncle placed the greatest confidence in him as regarded money—a great deal more than Mr. Isaacs had done for a long time.

“ Shall I or shall I not ? ” questioned he with himself. Oh, how bad it is when we begin to parley with principle !

“ No, I will not ! ” said he ; but he said it feebly, as if he were not at all sure—as if he wanted, if he could, to deceive himself into a notion of his own virtue. “ No, I will not ! ” said he, again and again —“ at least, not to-day ! ” he should have added, to be quite honest to himself.

The next week was Christmas week, and it had been long an understood thing that Williams was to have a holiday on Christmas-day : he ventured to mention it to Mr. Osborne, spite of the unpleasant memory of the prescription. He had heard, he said, how beautiful the gardens at Alton Towers looked in the winter, with snow on the ground and hoar-frost on the trees ; he hoped he might be permitted to go there on Christmas-day. “ He would be very industrious,” he said, “ in future ; ” and being once on the subject, he launched out freely. “ He was so sorry, so ashamed,” he said, “ of the blunder he had made. Mr. Osborne had touched him so by his patience and forbearance.” Mr. Osborne, himself, thought that he had not shown much ; but so the young man said—“ and would he only grant him this

favour now, he would show how grateful he was." On Mr. Osborne — plain, honest, straight-forward man as he was, and with every tendency to the indulgence of his nephew,—all this made the very impression which was desired. "Poor fellow," thought he, "he is so cut up about that blunder; he has never looked like himself since—seems all in a tremble and a dream; one must not be too severe with him!"

"Yes, surely, he might go;" but Mr. Osborne could not imagine how there would be any pleasure in going alone—could not Reynolds, too, have a holiday? Williams, who did not by any means think of taking a companion like Reynolds, reminded Mr. Osborne that Mr. Isaacs went out on Christmas-day, too, and Reynolds was to have his holiday on Christmas-eve with his aunts.

Miss Kendricks had not been to the Osbornes' since the little rencontre on Sunday-morning; both they and the Osbornes still let the little affair rankle in their minds. It was that sort of quarrel which sometimes the merest trifle occasions between friends, and whether it shall be healed, or whether it shall become a wide and lasting breach, depends upon one or other of them on the first occasion of anxiety or sorrow. As yet, however, that occasion had not presented itself, and Reynolds went to spend Christmas-eve with his aunts without being the bearer of any message from Mrs. Osborne. Such a thing had never happened before. The Osbornes, also, were spending Christmas-eve out, and nobody was left at home but Mr. Isaacs and Williams.

With Williams it seemed as if the crisis of his fate were come; he had formed his own plans both for

that evening and the morrow ; as far as regarded that evening, he had formed them in counsel with himself and in desperation, and to the stifling of the voice of conscience within him. "But what must be, must," said he ; "go there with her I must and shall, and to go I must have money."

His plans were, therefore, formed. Reynolds was out of the way ; his uncle was so, too ; and he made himself sedulously useful in the shop ; he made pills, and mixed emulsions for coughs and sold boxes of issue-plaisters, and moved here and there with such alacrity as astonished and delighted poor Mr. Isaacs, who was racked that evening with toothache.

"Go and sit down by the parlour-fire," said Williams, as the time for shutting up the shop approached, "I'll make up the books and see that all is left straight, and you go and make yourself comfortable."

Mr. Isaacs, well pleased to leave his post at the desk, where a draught of cold air came in keenly against his ailing tooth, went into the back-parlour, and Williams had the shop all to himself. The warehouse-boy put up the shutters, raked out the fire, and was dismissed for the night. Williams added up the day-book, counted the money in the till, put three-and-sixpence in his pocket, and entered the amount, minus this, in the day-ledger ; and then, unlocking the shop-safe with a trembling hand, looked this way and that, and thought if Isaacs should come in, or if Mr. Osborne should be returning early by some chance, and peep through a crack of the shutters. Oh, that miserable if ! But why was he so fearful ! Alas, because he intended to take money as he had already done from the till.

Once or twice before, Mr. Isaacs had found some deficiency ; Mr. Osborne had never even suspected it ; he would as soon have thought of his wife robbing him as Williams.

The money was taken and dropped into the waistcoat pocket ; the safe was locked, and double-locked. If he could have seen his own face at that moment he would have started. But he did not ; and, rallying himself, he put out the shop-lights, and went into the back-parlour, where the candles were burning dimly with long, unsnuffed wicks, for poor Mr. Isaacs was gone to bed.

There was nobody in the room ; it was almost a shock to be thus thrown, as it were, upon himself and his own conscience.

“ Suppose,” thought he to himself, “ that, after all, I have only taken silver, two shillings and sixpence ; should I then go back and change them, though I know what a horror this stealing is ? I wish one had no need to do it ! ”

He put his hand into his pocket and drew the money forth to the light. It was gold—two guineas and a half. He felt glad that it was so. The next moment Reynolds returned—the gay, laughing, unanxious Reynolds—Williams envied him his lightness of heart.

The next morning the church-bells rang ; the sun shone bright, and the slight covering of snow and hoar-frost was like the festal garment of nature. The houses were decked with holly and ivy, people were moving briskly about—the whole town was merry ; even the paupers in the parish workhouse arose that morning with cheerful expectation, for that day they were to have roast-beef and plum-pudding for dinner.

Many people hired horses and gigs that day and drove out into the country, so that there was nothing at all remarkable in the circumstance of old Evans driving one of his miserable hacks, which, however, was made to wear its best looks that day, in one of his smartest gigs, along the high street and half-a-mile beyond the end of the town. Of this nobody took any notice, and it was so contrived, also, that nobody saw Williams, whose great-coat collar stood up above his ears, whilst his hat was slouched over his eyes, assist into the said gig Miss Bannerman, dressed in a dark blue cloak trimmed with fur, and a black velvet bonnet, and then take his seat beside her, and drive off briskly. On they drove, and presently overtook two other gigs, in which were seated five members, male and female, of the theatrical corps, who, like them, were going to spend the day in the gardens of Alton Towers. But as with these other five persons we have very little to do, we shall drop them for the present, and confine ourselves to our young couple, just as if they were quite alone.

Williams was enraptured with his fair companion. She looked lovelier than ever in that black velvet bonnet ; the walk in the clear winter air had brought a colour to her cheek like that of the June rose. She was, indeed, very lovely—but not with that vulgar loveliness which alone consists of beauty of complexion, hair as dark and glossy as “the raven’s wing,” and “dark, blue eyes, as soft as those of the dove.” These she had, it is true ; but that which constituted the real charm of her countenance was a sentiment of tenderness, calm decision, and truth and love. It was a face to fill with tears the eyes of any beholder capable of appreciating qualities such as

these, in a being exposed to every temptation which can assail beauty and taint the delicacy of woman. Jessie Bannerman, though a "player-wench," as half the town called her, was an extraordinary girl. She knew her own personal worth, and her own dignity as a woman, and she made her lovers feel it, too. It is impossible to say what was the peculiar charm which attracted her towards Williams, but to him she had really given her affections ;—this she had never denied, she was really in earnest in her love ;—and Williams was never with her without feeling, as it were, under the influence of a superior nature. He fancied that he adored her, that he would have laid down his life for her : he bought the pleasure of being in her company at the expense of his own probity ; and yet he felt sure all the time that could she have only known this she would have rejected pleasure at such a cost.

Beautiful as were those magnificent gardens, which are said to be laid out on the traditional plan of the hanging gardens of Babylon, the lovers took but little notice of them ; he was engrossed by her, and she by her own thoughts. At length they reached a pavilion, which, lying in the full sunshine, was warm almost as in summer. Here they seated themselves, and Jessie, turning to the young man, said—

"Now, we have had enough of flattery and nonsense—we must talk seriously. You have talked hitherto ; you must now listen to me. My unhappy family history, which you have heard, can only give you the idea of me as of a creature sprung of wretchedness and crime, to whom God has given, for some mysterious purpose, remarkable gifts—gifts worse than useless if I am to become only the poor

degraded being which my present life may seem to foretell. But, Edward," said she, fixing her large, calm eyes upon him, "it must not be so ; our destinies, after all, are, in great measure, in our own hands ; a spirit within tells me so, and that spirit shall be my guide.

"I have many lovers, but how few there are who would marry such a one as me. I speak plainly, Edward, for one of us must do so ; and as I have so much more experience in life than you, and understand you better even than you understand yourself, I speak to you openly. You talk of marriage : what nonsense it is of you, who are as yet a boy, and do not know even your own mind ! I believe that you love me ; but as yet you do not understand me perfectly, for you have seen only that which is idle and trifling in me ; but indeed I am capable of much that is good and ennobling and valuable in life."

"Oh, Jessie," said the young man impatiently, and ready to throw himself at her feet, "let us unite our fates at once. I know what you are—I wish you not other than you are—let me rescue you from a fate which is unworthy of you ! My aunt is good. When she knows your excellence she will love you as a daughter : they love me, but how much more will they love you !"

"All nonsense," returned Jessie ; "you talk like a child, as you are ; you, that dare not even let them know of our acquaintance, to talk thus ! No, no ; we must have patience, and wait for the true time. You must wait for me for five years."

"I will go with you," interrupted Williams ; "what is all the world to me without you ! I know that I, too, have talents—I would be prompter

even, or candle-snuffer, or anything to be near you ! ”

Jessie laughed and shook her head—“ That would never do,” said she ; “ that would not satisfy me. My father,” she continued, “ blames me for want of ambition ; but he mistakes me : I *am* ambitious—ambitious of the greatest good which life can give, and that is real love and domestic happiness ! Not such love as we act night after night, poor, unreal love, all tinsel and glitter ;—no, no, the love that I mean is self-denying, long-suffering, unobtrusive, as free to the poor as to the rich. Oh, Edward, I was ill not long ago ; the company went on without me, and I and my good grandmother—for such she is—remained in the house of a poor tailor. Would you believe it, but it was truly in that house, and with those humble people, that I first learned what true love was, and what was the real meaning and worth of life. Happiness there was a substantial thing, not dependent on wealth or the world’s favour, for of these they had nothing ; not wavering or uncertain, according to the whim of the moment, but as real and steadfast as life itself. Love was never talked of, but they dwelt in its spirit ; it was as if the atmosphere of a better region filled the house ; the children were born in it, and breathed it as their native air, and they were good and kind like their parents. A light then broke in upon my mind. My grandmother saw and felt these things as I did ;—she is not, Edward, the deaf, stupid old woman which it is her will to appear ; but that is her secret—she and I understand each other. The goal which I have set before my ambition is a home of love, and my prayers, Heaven knows, are, that I may be kept pure and

made worthy of it. This is, perhaps, my religion : in the eyes of thousands of good people I am but as a poor outcast child of perdition—worse than a pagan.”

“ You are a real divine angel,” exclaimed the young man ; “ Mrs. Osborne would love you—she must and shall know you,” cried he, for at that moment everything seemed easy to him. “ When they know you they will not oppose our union. I will steadfastly stick to business ; my uncle is not a poor man ; he will. I am sure, give me a share in his business. I will work so hard for you, and we will be so happy. I shall become good through you ; I shall owe my salvation to you !”

“ Amen !” said Jessie, solemnly ; “ but I, that am wiser than you in some things, must guide you a little. You are yet an apprentice—I am yet under my father’s control : a time will come when we shall both be free. If you love me truly, you must wait till then. Five years from now shall be our time of trial. This is Christmas-day. You shall hear from me on the fifth anniversary of this day, but to me you shall not write. Five years from this time our trial shall have ended. Can you be true to me for so long ?—I know that I shall be true to you !”

Lovers’ vows sound foolish ; therefore, we will not write down the violent protestations with which Williams responded to this singular proposal. He swore that neither heaven nor earth could ever change him—and at the time he thought so.

(For my part, I, that narrate this story, must here put in, by way of parenthesis, that had I been present, or had been in any way consulted, I should have

said that such a connection was of that doubtful character, that, spite of Jessie's really superior nature, the best thing would have been to have put an end to the whole affair as soon as possible. But, as neither I nor anybody else of great discretion was present, the lovers made this compact, and then, the rest of the party joining them soon afterwards, they all adjourned to the village inn to dinner.)

It was as merry a dinner as ever was eaten by a set of poor players. They ate, and drank, and sung, and told witty anecdotes, and were ten times freer and easier than so many lords and ladies. The host and the hostess came to the parlour door, and listened and laughed too, and, spite of the really serious conversation which had passed between him and Jessie in the garden, Williams caught the infection of the company's mirth, and was as gay as any of them. Something was said of Mr. Goodman, and Williams, who had always maintained that he had some talent for acting, began to mimic his grave and measured way of speaking. His personation was called for again and again, and he was declared quite a genius. Bassett, they said, could not do it half as well. They then revealed to him a secret. Anderson, who had the talent for writing little comic pieces of one or two acts, had written one called "The Parson in Love," intended to ridicule Mr. Goodman: there was a young actress in the piece, Lucinda, who was to personate a puritan lady, Mrs. Tabitha Twiggem, who was to inveigle the clergyman, and lead him into endless fooleries. Jessie was to take this character and Bassett was to take that of Parson Perfect—and it was to be given out that he was a new actor from

London. Now Williams was so superior to Bassett that if he would only consent to take the character and act, they would manage it ;—they would put off Bassett with something else, or let him act in another piece,—but Williams must be their Parson Perfect ;—they would have no nay. Anderson, who was of the party, had a scene in his pocket, Williams must look it over and try it—he did so—Bravo ! bravissimo ! they exclaimed : it was inimitable ! Parson Goodman would never show his face after the public had seen that ; he would have had enough of preaching against players ! Williams, delighted to excel Bassett in anything, consented to act. Jessie heard all that went on, and did not oppose his acting. It was very clever, she said, and much better than she expected.

And now the company rose and began to talk of their departure. It was already dusk, and bitterly cold.

“ Ah, my good fellow,” said Anderson, who was deputed to be paymaster-general for the players, as he saw Williams about to put his hand in his pocket for his own share of the expenses—“ have you a few spare shillings in your pocket, for the fellow has made me a deuced great bill—let me see, have you five-and-twenty ? ”

Williams, who was in high good humour, and greatly flattered by the applause which his acting had obtained, drew out from his pocket a handful of loose change.

“ Ah ! capital ! ” said Anderson, and took somewhere about seven-and-twenty shillings, saying, “ we ’ll have a reckoning when we get home.”

Away drove the company. The snow, which had thawed in the morning, had frozen again in the after-

noon, and it was terribly slippery, as well as cold. The gigs drove off, agreeing, on account of the bad state of the roads, to keep in company. Williams and Jessie were last. Perhaps Williams might be the worst driver in the company; perhaps, and most probably, his horse was the worst conditioned; however that might be, within the first two miles their companions got far ahead of them, and with every mile their horse seemed to become stiffer and clumsier; at last, down he came, but, fortunately not lower than his knees. Williams pulled him up again, and giving him a series of cuts with his whip, broke that useful instrument, but fortunately sent on his steed, for a short time, at least, at a much brisker and therefore safer pace. Everybody knows what a hopeless thing it is to drive a dull worn-out horse with a broken whip; slower and slower went the creature, and Williams pommelled with the stump of his whip, and flapped with his reins till he made himself quite hot.

“Ah! if our path through life should be like this,” sighed poor Jessie; and scarcely had she finished the sentence when down came the horse flat to his nose, with his legs doubled under him. Crash! went one shaft, and out flew Williams on one side and poor Jessie on the other. It was a miracle that they were not both killed or had some bones broken. Williams sprang to his feet, hardly knowing that he was down, and with very becoming lover-like anxiety flew to look after his lady. Fortunately she was not hurt, not the least in the world, said she eagerly, in her turn inquiring after him. No, they were not either of them hurt—only Jessie then confessed to a very little pain in her wrist; she thought that she

must have sprained it. Williams was in the greatest distress—what was to be done? For her, nothing, she said. There was a village just at hand, and thither she would hasten for help, whilst he stayed with the horse; and off she went, firm-footed as a young roe. The village was just by, and the most ready help was obtained at the first house. Men returned with her, with rope and lanterns, and presently the horse was on his legs again, not looking much worse than before, excepting for his broken knees; the shaft was tied together, and they were assured that there would be no difficulty about going forward, as the road was well tracked beyond the village, besides which, a peasant offered, for half-a-crown, to accompany them to the town with a lantern.

Very little was said by the lovers during the remainder of their journey. Jessie seemed sunk in thought, and so was Williams. for he was really frightened to think how he should get off with Evans, regarding the broken shaft and the broken knees of the horse. Money, he knew, would make all straight; but where in the world was the money to come from? He did not believe that he had more than a guinea left; thirteen shillings he had to pay for the hire of the horse and gig, and half-a-crown must go to the man with the lantern.

How those anxieties about money thrust themselves like evil demons between us and our pleasures—nay, even between us and our comforts! We have known many a dinner spoiled by the thought of the cost; many a good night's rest broken because some dire thought or other about want of cash has been gnawing at our heart! And thus it was with Williams; all the day's pleasure was spoiled to him

now by the thought of the reckoning. At length the unfortunate steed stopped at the gate which led to his stable. It was not so late after all ; it was only eight o'clock. Their companions had arrived long before and were all dispersed ; but the first person whom Williams saw on dismounting was no other than Reynolds, who, on his side, stared in amazement, and then looked reproachfully. He had then been with that young actress to Alton ! This was what he wanted the holiday for !

Without, however, waiting for a word from him, Williams called him aside, and putting the guinea into his hand, said, " Just run over, there's a good fellow, to Reeves's"—this was a small druggist and grocer's shop opposite, which Mr. Osborne supplied—" and get me change," for Williams knew that if he offered the full sum to Evans he should get no change, and change he must have to dismiss the peasant.

Reynolds, amazed as he was, yet thinking no harm, for he had always seen Williams with plenty of money, brought back the change.

" And now stop one moment with Miss Bannerman," said he, " whilst I get the fellow paid," for Williams preferred doing this alone. Reynolds, though full of prejudices against players, both male and female, could not refuse, and Williams soon after joined them, when both young men having accompanied Jessie to the patten-maker's door, went home together, but not before Williams had prescribed bandages and fomentations for the sprained wrist, and had promised to bring her that very night an embrocation himself.

If Williams had before been unfit to attend to his business, he was much more so now. Jessie was never

out of his thoughts ; considering that his aunt and uncle as it were espoused the cause of the players, he was for ever scheming whether he could not bring Jessie and his aunt acquainted ; he thought of her being adopted as a daughter into the family—he thought of a thousand unlikely things—in fact, in the excited state of mind he then was, he could not tell probable from improbable things ; not at all ! He even thought of getting the two guineas which Evans demanded for the damaged horse and gig from poor Reynolds. Reynolds could borrow the money from his aunts as if on his own account, he thought.

Thus pondered and thus schemed Williams, and in the mean time his friends the players were preparing to bring out the new comedy of “ The Parson in Love ;” the character of Parson Perfect to be performed by “ a new actor from London,” and the double character of Lucinda and Tabitha Twiggem by Miss Jessie Bannerman.

Williams duly received his part in MS., which he privately learned and rehearsed, not daring, for the life of him, however, to take Reynolds into his confidence on this subject, for ever since the night of the Fair Quaker of Deal he had been as vehement against players and playgoers as his aunts or Mr. Goodman himself.

A rehearsal of the whole piece was proposed at Mr. Maxwell’s lodgings on Sunday afternoon, and thither of course Williams was summoned. But when he got there something very peculiar presented itself. There was Tom Bassett, to whom also a copy of the part of Parson Perfect had been sent—there he was, come to rehearse his part, and had brought with him an order for five-and-twenty

tickets. How was this? both young men seemed to inquire—but there was nobody to answer them—the whole theatrical staff seemed to be in the next room, which was Mr. Maxwell's bed-room. Voices were heard in this said bed-room, loud voices and angry voices, too, and now and then the two rival amateur-actors had the pleasure of hearing their own names mentioned.

To pass away the awkward time, and to seem at his ease, Williams threw himself into an arm-chair and drew his manuscript from his pocket, and began to turn it over. Bassett seeing this, and instantly detecting that his rival's part actually was his own, pulled out his also, and seating himself opposite, glanced from the paper in his hand at his rival, with no very amicable expression of countenance. Just as Williams was about to return the expression the door opened, and in walked Jessie. She bowed courteously to both young men, and thus addressed them:—

“There has been a strange and almost ludicrous mistake made with regard to the part of Parson Perfect. Mr. Anderson, it seems, intended it for Mr. Williams.”

“He himself offered it to me, my dear Miss Bannerman,” interrupted Bassett.

Jessie waved her hand, and continued, “Mr. Anderson says that it was his wish that Mr. Williams should take the character. Mr. Maxwell on the contrary very much prefers Mr. Bassett having it. Very warm words,” said she, smiling, “as no doubt you have heard—for the walls are thin—have arisen on the subject. This, however, is their decision, that I, who take the part of Lucinda, shall make the

choice between you. Will you, gentlemen, give me your hands to be satisfied with my decision, and not let ill-will arise between you in consequence, for to one I must show a preference?"

"We will be quite satisfied," said they both, each sure of the preference, and took the offered hand, which was extended with the sweetest of smiles.

"Then, Mr. Bassett," said she, "you take the part. You are Parson Perfect and I Lucinda."

Williams dashed his manuscript to the floor and looked daggers at them both.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BUBBLE BURST.

THE next day the walls were placarded; the new comedy of 'The Parson in Love' was to be acted with new scenery, new actors, and endless new attractions. The sight was gall and wormwood to Williams. He had nevertheless in the bottom of his soul the conviction that Jessie's decision was influenced by some feeling of advantage or propriety as regarded himself, but still he was mortified. In the eyes of his rival he was rejected.

The whole town talked of the new piece; a rumour got abroad that Mr. Goodnan was to be quizzed. Some of the young actors' pranks in the town had caused a little scandal; the public mind was inclining against them. Good, sober house-keepers found their servants' heads turned about the theatre; housemaids read plays while they should have made beds; cooks gossiped for whole hours at the bakehouse about the handsome actors and actresses. Everything was evidently going wrong.

"It is high time those people left the town," said those who were just beginning to veer to the clergyman's side.

"Those disreputable people ought to be packed off by authority," said they who had thought with the clergyman all the time; "and if they venture to ridicule him in their obscene plays, they *shall* be packed off—and that handily."

Williams had told Jessie that he would not go to the theatre that night; that he could not bear to see her acting with Bassett. It would drive him mad, he said. Jessie did not urge it, and he was almost out of his mind with jealousy and chagrin. It is possible, however, that, after all, he might have gone, had it not been for an awkward affair which just then happened.

Mr. Osborne and Mr. Isaacs were together in the shop, when Mr. Reeves came in, and scratching his head, said, "Is young Reynolds anywhere about?"

He was not, said Mr. Isaacs, he was gone into the country on business.

"Why, you see," said Reeves, addressing Mr. Isaacs, and leaning on the counter with both his elbows, and taking a guinea from his pocket—"that young gentleman got me to give him change, maybe a fortnight ago—on the evening of Christmas-day. Now it is an awkward thing to come with money so long afterwards—but I put the guinea aside at the time—I'll swear to it that it's the same—and now you see it's light weight. But young Mr. Reynolds will know all about it in a minute."

Long before this speech was ended, Mr. Osborne, who had come round the counter, took the guinea out of Reeves's hand and carefully examined it.

He then went to his money-safe, and looking among his gold came back and asked Isaacs in an undertone from whom he had the guinea?

"From Reynolds," returned Isaacs, and went on industriously polishing a pair of scales.

Williams came in at that moment, but Reeves was so often there on business that he took no notice, and seating himself at the apprentices' desk began to think of Jessie and the play.

"We will have it made right, Mr. Reeves," said Mr. Osborne hurriedly, when Williams came in. "Mr. Isaacs shall see you to-morrow."

When Reynolds returned in the evening he was summoned to Mr. Osborne's presence, who, producing the guinea, asked, "Do you know anything of this guinea?"

Reynolds took it into his hand, and examining it, returned it, saying that he did not.

"Did you," inquired his master, "get change some little time ago from Mr. Reeves for a guinea?"

Reynolds changed colour slightly, and after a moment's pause, said, "I did."

"And whence had you the guinea?" asked he.

Reynolds looked confused and was silent.

"There is something singular in this," said Mr. Osborne, "I must have an answer. The money was in my possession a little time ago. I knew it to be light, and marked it with a penknife that I might not pay it away. It has gone from my cash-box. I may have paid it away by mistake—but then how came it into your hands, or why do you refuse to account for it? I would not willingly suspect."

"Sir," interrupted Reynolds, "I am innocent of

what you suspect—I never took a sixpence which was not my own—but yet of that money I cannot give an account.”

“It looks suspicious,” said Mr. Osborne.

“It does,” said Reynolds, “but that I cannot help—all I can ask is four-and-twenty hours for consideration.”

“You shall have it,” said Mr. Osborne.

It was Mr. Isaacs’s custom after seven o’clock to sit in the back parlour, where he read the newspaper, or dozed a little,—after that time the apprentices were alone.

“Williams,” said Reynolds, as soon as he was gone, “you have got me into a pretty scrape about changing that guinea for you.”

Williams felt as if his very heart grew chill.

“It was light weight,” said Reynolds, “and Reeves has brought it back again. Mr. Osborne insists on knowing how I came by it; there was, it seems, his private mark on it.”

“How came he to know anything about it?” asked Williams angrily. Reynolds told.

“The deuce take it!” muttered Williams.

“Well,” said Reynolds, “it is your own affair, you know. I have confessed nothing, because I would not betray you—but if blame there be about it—you must bear it. I am innocent and can clear myself in a minute, and would have done so if it had not been for getting you into trouble about that girl.”

“The deuce take it,” again muttered Williams.

“You must make up your mind about what you’ll do,” said Reynolds, “I shall clear myself to-morrow.”

“Clear yourself, and be hanged to you,” returned

Williams—"clearing one's-self is easy enough—what, do you take me for a thief? It's easy enough to clear myself about the money—I don't look at every guinea that is given me—I received only the other day some money from Mrs. Osborne!—What a fuss is here about the money!—but the point is not to let it come out about taking Miss Bannerman to Alton. And then there is that wretched Evans dunning about his old dog-tit of a horse and his tumble-down gig—I was a fool for ever going to him! The fellow is as importunate as death. Now, I say, Reynolds, cannot you borrow the money for me? Won't your aunts or somebody lend it you?"

"You owe me already two pounds fifteen," said Reynolds,—“and as to borrowing from my aunts I do not believe that they will lend me any.”

"Oh, for heaven's sake, go and try!" said Williams, deeply excited—"this shall be the last time that I ever will borrow from you. I'll turn over a new leaf, I do assure you I will! I'll be as steady as you are!"

We need not go through all the conversation that ensued, the flatteries, the entreaties, the confessions of past folly and extravagance, and the humble, contrite promises of amendment, all of which so worked upon Reynolds that he consented to make one more attack on his aunts.

When he reached his aunts, he found them in a state of vast excitement. Mrs. Proctor, the great town gossip, had just been there, and had brought a long exaggerated history of how the heads of all the apprentices in the town were turned with the players, and how, in particular, both of Mr. Osborne's young men were in love with one of them; they had been

seen walking late at night with that good-for-nothing Bannerman ; they had hired gigs for her and driven about the country with her, and spent money upon her without end.—There was a bunch of flowers that somebody had given her -- no doubt one of them —which cost fifteen shillings, and which Mary Parker, the butter-buyer, had brought by order from a gardener's in Birmingham. It was a sin and a shame that they were allowed to remain in the town, for thus these young men might be led into practices that might ruin them for life.

As he entered he found his aunt Joanna with her bonnet and cloak on, and with her servant dressed also, and with a lantern in her hand. Joanna, late as it was, full of zeal for the good name of her nephew, was setting out to Evans's, to make him recall his words with regard to her nephew taking out the players in gigs. She knew, she said, that Evans was wrong, and those who were to blame should bear the blame, and not the innocent. It was in vain that Reynolds made light of the matter as regarded himself ; she was bent upon vindicating him, and he, half-in anger and half with miserable apprehension for his friend, whose cause he felt as if he must espouse, sat down with his aunt Dorothy to wait the other's return.

On her return she came fraught with new tidings. It was Williams who had hired the gig ; he had taken a tribe of players with him to Alton, had treated them at the inn, where they had all got drunk, and in driving home like so many mad folks Williams had thrown down his horse, ruined it for ever, and broken the gig into the bargain.

" This comes," said Miss Kendrick, " of Mr.

Osborne's encouraging those abandoned people ; considering what might be the natural and inherited impulses of Williams, Mr. Osborne ought to have been doubly on his guard. But he has sown in the whirlwind and he may reap in the storm," said Joanna with emphasis.

Reynolds fired up at once. " It was not generous to be ripping up poor Williams's family misfortunes—what would she say if people did so by him ; he never would stand by silently and hear his friend thus spoken of."

It was a luckless rencontre. There was always a something in what the one said to excite the other. Poor Dorothy tried to make peace between them, but did not succeed. However, the end of it was that Reynolds must stay supper with them, and then, grown quite bold and desperate, he asked his aunts to lend him two guineas.

Joanna actually started ; " here was more of the devil's work," she said, adopting for the first time the clergyman's phrase—" no, she would not lend him a sixpence."

" I will," said Dorothy, " not that I am satisfied of all being right. But if he have done wrong we will hope that he may do so no more. We must endeavour to rule by love and not by severity, Joanna."

Reynolds returned home with the money.

There was not a deal of sleeping at the Osbornes' that night. Mr. and Mrs. Osborne talked over, with the deepest sorrow, the sad discovery which they believed was about to be made regarding Reynolds ; he who had seemed so steady, so, almost religious—how they grieved for his poor aunts. All the little pique was forgotten. Mrs. Osborne

felt as if, from this time forth, she should show them nothing but kindness, for this was indeed a sore grief that would cut them up sadly. "Poor Miss Kendricks!" that was the beginning and the end of their consultations.

Very little sleep, too, was there in the apprentices' room; none at all in Williams's bed. Now he thought of throwing himself at his aunt and uncle's feet, and confessing his love for Jessie and begging them to see and to hear her—if he could not move them, he was sure she could! Now he thought of confessing to having taken the money, and leaving Jessie to stand or fall, trusting to the future as regarded her; for their own credit's sake, he believed that they would shield him from public disgrace; then he tried how it would be if he steadfastly declared the light guinea to have been given him by Mrs Osborne—but then came the difficulty about its being changed at Reeves's. It was a bad, entangled affair, and he vowed with himself, that once clear of it, and all his little debts paid, he never would get into any such mess again!

The next morning he was up early, and set out to pay Evans and have done with him. Unfortunately, however, he went a little out of his way that he might pass the patten-maker's, and thus have the pleasure of passing the house that held Jessie. A slight tap at the parlour-window arrested his steps. It was old Mrs. Bellamy, who in her old night-cap stood there, and beckoned him in. Jessie was down also, and, early as it was, they were going to breakfast.

"We shall not now remain many days here," said Jessie on his entrance, "if, indeed, many hours. You are angry with me I know, but you will pre-

sently see that it was the truest regard for you which influenced my decision. This wretched pasquinade was not my doing ; and when you hear those who are really good and excellent in the town—among the rest the Osbornes—censuring me for my part in it, then, remember, I was but as the puppet ; others pulled the wires ; had I been a free agent it should not have been so. But Edward,” said she solemnly, “if you hear the worst and the most unjust things said against me, do not bring yourself into trouble by defending me. You know me better than they, and that is enough.”

“You shall not go with these people!” said Williams. “Oh, if Mrs. Osborne did but know you!”

“It is impossible,” returned Jessie, “she, like everybody else, will take against me. You will hear how we shall be abused ; it will be a disgrace to have been acquainted with us. All I ask, then, is, that in your own heart you will not disown me. Never mention my name—but oh, Edward !” said she, with tears in her eyes—“if young men ever have serious moments of prayer—then remember me.”

The young man made the most passionate vows of fidelity.

“And now,” said she, “we part—you must not attempt to see me again. We shall meet again—but not yet—in five years—and then, perhaps, not to part again.—Till then, farewell !”

There was something so singular and solemn in her manner, that Williams felt almost awed. He seemed to himself to stand like a block, and do nothing—what was vowing fidelity—he must give her some token of his truth. He had not a ring to break between them, but he had a guinea—he rushed out to the patten-maker’s shop and cut a guinea in

two. "Here is gold broken between us," said he, "keep one half for my sake!"

"It is *cut*, not broken," said the old woman, "and that is unlucky."

"Money," said Jessie, "was not needed between us—what nonsense it was to do so—a lock of your hair would have been better—or, best of all, nothing—for true-love needs no token—yet I will not refuse your gift," said she, putting the gold into her bosom.—Now farewell—and when I am evil spoken of—do not let your heart be ashamed of me!"

"Never," said Williams; "the worse they say the better shall I love you!"

No sooner was Williams out of the house than he thought how foolishly he had done in sacrificing the guinea! How much wiser she was than himself! He could not now pay Evans, and there was nothing to do but go home to breakfast.

"It never rains but it pours," says one proverb; and another, which means the same thing, says that "misfortunes never come alone." It was so now with poor Williams. But before he reached home we must mention what he saw as he left the patten-maker's door. A group of men and boys were tearing down from the walls the players' bills, and daubing those which they could not reach, with mud. It was as Jessie had said; public abhorrence had set in against the players.

When Williams arrived at home, who should be standing in the shop but Evans; fortunately Reynolds alone was there.

"Oh," said Williams, without allowing Evans time to speak, "I have been in search of you—there's a guinea for you. What do you come after me for?"

"After you," said Evans, looking at the guinea

with disdain, "why am I to be overhauled as I was by Miss Kendrick last night, as an abettor of players and the very scum of the earth; why? I say, and I'll ask it of any man!"

"Ask who you will," returned Williams in an agitated voice, "but, for Heaven's sake, begone with you. You know that I mean to pay you honestly.—I set out this morning to pay you.—Now, for Heaven's sake, I would not that Mr. Osborne knew anything about it!"

"Will you pay me or not?" asked Evans doggedly, holding out his hand with the one guinea in it.

"Are you indebted two guineas to this man for mischief done to a horse and gig hired by you to take a player to Alton on Christmas-day?" asked Mr. Osborne in an awful voice close behind him.

He saw that he was betrayed, and turning pale as death he said not a word.

Evans, who really was not a bad-hearted man, was sorry in a moment for what he had done, and began to apologise—he could wait—he was sorry, only he had been provoked, &c.

It was too late either to be sorry or to apologise. Mr. Osborne again sternly demanded from his nephew if the money were due—if he had promised to pay it.

"He makes that demand," said Williams, "but the horse was broken-knee'd and broken-winded—"

Mr. Osborne cut his explanation short by putting another guinea into Evans's hand and bidding him go about his business.

With a sad countenance Mr. and Mrs. Osborne sat down to breakfast. Everybody were drinking their coffee in silence, when a loud knock at the private door startled them all. The next moment the Rev. Mr. Goodman entered; and Mr. Isaacs, who had not

made half a breakfast, rose from his chair and went out. The two apprentices were about doing the same thing, when Mr. Goodman begged that they might stay. He seemed very much excited; he came, he said, to complain of the vile, obscene pasquinade, which had been acted the night before, and in which he heard with sorrow and the deepest astonishment that a character intended to ridicule himself had been performed by this young man, said he, pointing to Williams, and with this he drew from his pocket a play-bill, and pointed out, "Parson Perfect—a young amateur actor from London."

"You are under a mistake, my dear sir," said good Mr. Osborne, really glad to be able to defend his nephew.

"I think I may go," said Reynolds, anxious not to witness the trouble which he feared hung over his friend.

"You may not go," said the clergyman sternly. "I have promised your excellent aunts to question you. I thought well of you, Reynolds," said he mournfully—"it has cut me to the heart to be deceived in you!"

"And what have I done?" asked he.

"This impatience is unbecoming," said the clergyman, "very unbecoming! Can you deny that you walked up and down the town, arm-in-arm, with that young girl, Bannerman, on Christmas-day-night?"

As Reynolds was about to reply, Miss Kendrick walked in, and scarcely was she seated when in rushed Mrs. Proctor, regardless of times and seasons. She came with a budget of news; but nobody could listen to her, and she went out again with something more interesting than all the rest to spread abroad, and that was of the awful conclave that was sitting in Mr. Osborne's parlour.

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

OLD ACQUAINTANCE AND NEW.

Mrs. PROCTOR and her favourite friend and gossip, Mrs. Morley, who now, after an absence of some years, had returned to reside again in the town, were sitting together at tea. The little white muslin blind was taken down from the window, for they wanted to have a good view of a funeral that was about to take place. Mrs. Proctor fortunately lived just by the church, so that she consequently saw all the marriages and funerals, and mostly invited some of her friends to see them with her. The funeral-bell now tolled solemnly ; the sun shone calmly over the beautiful church-yard, and on the open grave, and on the slow procession that now advanced towards it. The ladies at their window made their remarks ; “ it was a very handsome funeral ; the very first people of the town at it, and no wonder, for Mr. Osborne was respected by everybody.—And there was young Williams, whom the Osbornes had adopted as their son—what a handsome young man he was, and how well he looked in his mourning ! ”

Thus they made their comments and then sat down to talk.

“ Well, I ’ve heard say,” said Mrs. Proctor, “ that young Williams is as a relation of theirs—some suppose a son of that poor Phebe Phillips, Mrs. Osborne’s sister, that married so badly—but I don’t know—it may or it may not—however, you see, they were always very fond of him, and behaved to him as if he were their own son. When there was all that stir and scandal about the players ! Lord, what a stir it made ! They took his part and cleared him through thick and thin—though folks said there was something very scandalous and shameful, if it could only have come out. Nobody knew justly what it was, but those Miss Kendricks, who after that time were ten times more intimate than ever,—and Mr. Goodman, who was vicar here at that time. Well, as I was saying, after all that scandal, poor Mrs. Osborne never rightly was herself again. She had no regular complaint, but she got ailing ; now she went here and now there—now for change of air, now for mineral waters, and now for sea-bathing. It was well for Mr. Osborne that he had such a trustworthy person in his shop as Mr. Isaacs—young Reynolds was out of his time and was gone—was gone to some great house in London—his aunts thought of making something out of the common way of him—and it was well I say that Mr Osborne had that steady Mr. Isaacs with him, for after his wife was so poorly he never rightly cared about business—there ain’t many such husbands ! ”

“ I ’ve heard say,” remarked Mrs. Morley, “ that it was a love-match at first.”

“ Like enough,” returned her friend, “ and old

folks as they were, they were like lovers to the last. Folks said," continued she, "that all the trouble he had with his apprentices made him sick of business, and so he made Isaacs a sort of partner, and turned all management over to him. Young Williams was gone too—and then after three or four years they sent for Reynolds again—old Isaacs couldn't do without him—and when he came, Lord, what changes he brought with him—he'd got new notions in London—must have the old shop-front out—puts up new windows.—Inside and outside all was changed—begins some sort of manufacturing—gets head-man at once—Williams then comes back too—a fine young man indeed is he!—puts on a shop-apron again and buckles to—but anybody could plainly see that it was only to please the old folks. She died, however, and then when she was gone the old man was a regular wreck—broken-up in no time!—Why he was only sixty-nine when he died!—"

"I've heard Nurse Gee say," remarked Mrs. Morley, "that it was quite cutting to hear him in his dreams talking to her—and then when he woke and found how it was—it was up with him for days.—He got quite childish before he died.—I wonder how he has left his property?"

Some weeks after this the ladies were again together, and with them Miss Jenkins, who was cousin to Lawyer Bishop's wife, and she it was who had first brought the news to her friends that Mr. Osborne's will had surprised everybody—he had left positively twenty thousand pounds, every penny of which went to Williams, without a farthing's legacy to go out of it. His house and business he left jointly to old Isaacs, Reynolds, and young Williams,

only Williams's name was to stand first in the firm.

The ladies were again talking on this subject, which was not easily exhausted, when another was introduced in consequence of a small modest-looking card being brought in by Mrs. Proctor's maid, and which ran thus, "Marianne Jervis, Miniature-painter, and Teacher of Fancy Work of all kinds, at Mrs. Cope's, Milliner, Balance Street."

"Oh," said Miss Jenkins, recognising the card at first sight, "that is really a wonderful girl, have you seen none of her work? She does all kinds of work—paints miniatures delightfully—does poonah painting, and makes rice-paper flowers and wax flowers—just like life—and makes bags of bead-work; and paints screens; and does everything; and so cheap—it's wonderful!—You may find your own materials if you like; and she makes them up beautiful! Mrs. Tom Bevington has bought some wax flowers from her, and my cousin Mrs. Bishop is going to have her to paint the baby, and the black spaniel. She has Mrs. Cope's parlour: there is her father with her, a very old-looking man, who goes about with little packets of stationery, boxes of steel-pens, wafers and sealing-wax, wrapped up together, saying that, 'all these are for one shilling only:' he leaves them one day and calls for them the next; and looks like a broken-down gentleman."

"He has been here," said Mrs. Proctor, "but I make a principle of never encouraging beggars of any kind."

"They are not exactly beggars," said Miss Jenkins, who had established herself as a patroness of the young *artiste*—"and she is the loveliest little creature you ever saw, so small and delicately

made; with a complexion like marble; and yet pretty as she is, she is so steady and so kind to her father, and works so hard—Mrs. Cope says she is always up till after midnight.—Have you never seen her?” asked she—neither of the ladies could recollect having done so—but how did she dress?

“Always in black,” returned Miss Jenkins, “in a black stuff frock, little black cloak, and a close black chip bonnet.”

No, the ladies had never seen her, nor had they much desire to see her. There was something mostly not quite right about such people. Many thought that Mrs. Cope, considering that she was now a widow, and had just begun business, ought to mind whom she took into her house. She got into a sad scrape some years ago, when her husband was living, with having some good-for-nothing players lodging there. They wished, for her sake, that it might all turn out right.

We will now, the friendly reader and myself, look into that same little parlour, which formerly we called the patten-maker's, but which for the last twelve months served the patten-maker's widow as her little show-room; but which now she had let, business not being very successful, to the young miniature-painter and maker of fancy-work, and her dejected-looking father.

“And, father dear, don't be cast down,” said the young girl, “I am sure that he would not have the heart purposely to avoid you. There must be some accident about the letter being returned; depend upon it, one so young, and brought up with such good people, must be good like them. All will be right in time; only, father dear, do not be cast

down!" said she, throwing her arms round his neck, and playfully twisting her small fingers in his thin gray hair. "It has not been combed," said she, "all the morning;" and, taking a small case-comb from her father's waistcoat pocket, she began smoothing and arranging his hair. It seemed to have a soothing influence on him; he sat still, and his face grew calmer.

"Well, well, child," said he at length, putting her gently from him, "I must be going, and if I am not back to-night, don't be alarmed. I shall go round by Lichfield and Burton, and may be absent two or three days."

"But I must know, first of all," said she, cheerfully, "that all is ready for your journey. Have you got your night-cap? Nay, I must see it before I can believe. Ah good, yes! And your gloves? and let me see that there are no holes in them. Sit down like a dear father, while I mend them; you will have walking enough before you come back!" and, so saying, the dear, cheerful, little creature took out her little needle-book and thimble, and mended up the old gloves as tidily as if they had been new, though anybody but she would have said that they were past mending months ago. How like the most skilful of valets she brushed his old coat, which, like his gloves, had seen its best days long ago, chatting and singing all the while like a spirit of love and gladness as she was.

When all these little offices were done for him, and the neat little paper of sandwiches put into his pocket before his eye, and he duly warned to remember that he had them with him, and not to do as he did sometimes, go famishing all day, and then bring them home dry in his pocket at night—which she assured

him was anything but economical.—When all this was done, and his blue camlet-bag, which looked very much like a lawyer's, and which contained his neat little packets of stationery, was set on the table before him, she brushed his hat, and set his stick ready for him; and then kissing him, woke him from a reverie into which he had fallen.

Poor man! he looked harassed and weary, and not fit to begin a foot-journey, even of two days; and so his daughter thought, and at another time she might have urged his staying at home, but now she had reasons of her own for wishing him out of the way, at least for a little while; so begging him always to keep the shady side of the road, and not to be afraid of spending sixpence or a shilling in getting an occasional lift in a returned chaise or even a cart, and never to walk too far without resting, she did her best to speed him on his way, and the poor day-dreaming, unfortunate man took up his bag and stick, and, kissing her tenderly, went out.

CHAPTER II.

A CONTRE-TEMPS.

As soon as her father was gone, she set herself busily to work; first of all, she took all her little store of fancy-work and painting out of the window, dusted the inside of the window, blew every particle of dust from the various articles, and thought to herself how fortunate it was that this window lay to the north, and thus had so little sun to fade the things, though it was a pity that even here the flies made such work over everything. But, however, all was now neatly arranged in the window, and she

thought that they had never looked so nice before ; next she set out her little table with her drawing materials, and reared up the miniature of Mrs. Bishop's chubby baby, which was not at all amiss, and the large drawing of the black spaniel, and made everything look neat and business-like, that if Mrs. Cope had to bring anybody in during her absence, things might look to advantage.

All this ended, and nobody in this world could make poverty wear a fairer face than Marianne, she went into her little chamber to dress. She had her own reasons for wishing to look very charming this morning. She had often been to the smart new-fronted shop of Williams, Isaacs, and Co. ; she had been sent there by her father for wafers and ingredients for his cheap sealing-wax ; and old Mr. Isaacs and young Mr. Reynolds had taken great notice of her ; Williams she had never seen. Some way or other young Reynolds always served her ; she liked to be served by him in preference to any one, and whenever she had been to the shop, he could never think of anything but her all day long, and many a night he had dreamed of her. She had done the very same thing by him. He talked of sitting for his miniature, and she wished with all her heart that he would.

Marianne knew her father's history, knew the reason for his coming to that town. It was the parable of the prodigal son reversed — it was the prodigal father seeking reconciliation with his fortunate son. He had sought for that reconciliation, and had been repulsed, disowned, treated as an impostor, and now his humble, touching letter had been returned unanswered. He was disheartened, wounded, crushed to the earth. He understood that his son passed much

of his time at Burton; to Burton therefore he went, but without explaining his intention to his daughter, determined to have an interview, and to drag pity and justice from him. Marianne, knowing her father's unsuccess, doubted in her own mind if he had gone wisely to work. She could not conceive her brother to be the harsh, proud, cold-hearted being that her father had found him. Her father had forbidden her interfering, but now, however, she was resolved to make the attempt upon her own responsibility, and her good, hopeful heart said that she would succeed.

She was still dressed in the black stuff frock, little black cloak, and chip bonnet, but when she went tripping down stairs, and through Mrs. Cope's room, that good woman thought she had never seen her look so gay and lovely. "What in the world has the young creature in hand," said she, as she looked down the street after her, "she is a good angel, bless her little heart! that she is!"

Down the street went Marianne, and across the next, right up to the smart chemist's shop, where stood Reynolds, looking very gay and smart too, while two apprentices and old Mr. Isaacs were attending to customers. Reynolds, like Mrs. Cope, thought that he had never seen Marianne look so charming before, —there was a half-timid, half-trustful, and most peculiar expression, so good, so kind, yet so modest, in her face, as she looked at him, and asked for two-pennyworth of Indian rubber. He flew behind the counter, took out a drawer, picked out the very nicest pieces, all square and smooth, and every one of them sixpence a piece.

"Is this two-pence?" asked she, taking up the very largest and nicest.

"It is," said he.

She took two-pence from her little black silk bag, and wrapping them up in a small piece of writing paper, on which some words were written, gave them to him.

She saw him read the words—that was what she intended—and yet, for the life of her she could not help feeling almost faint as she did so; and without venturing another glance at him, she put the Indian rubber, which he had carefully wrapped up for her, in her bag, and hurried out paler than ever; and with such a trembling in her knees, that she thought certainly she should drop.

Reynolds, on his part, was no less agitated; the words on the paper were these: "I am deeply interested in the happiness of one dear to me as life; this obliges me to ask a private interview with you. Will you meet me this afternoon at four o'clock, in the fields between the old cotton mill and Crake-marsh."

Reynolds asked himself a thousand questions, not one of which he could answer. His feelings were of a very mixed kind. For one moment he was sorry that she had done this; the next he was charmed and flattered. What young man of five-and-twenty would not have been so too?

At half-past three, he was sitting, very carefully dressed—he had never taken such pains with his person before—on the stile just beyond the old cotton mill, looking towards the town, that he might catch the first glimpse of her; and a little after he saw the light, neat, black-apparelled form of Marianne approaching. He leaped down from his seat, and sprang forward to meet her. She looked paler than

ever, and greatly agitated. He would have taken her hand, but she withdrew it hastily, but not without his feeling how it trembled ; and standing still, she said gravely, "As yet all liberties with me are insults. Listen to me before you touch my hand, for as yet I appear to you but in a doubtful light. Fifteen years ago you parted with a little sister—do you remember her?"

"I do," said the young man, striking his hand upon his forehead, "I remember her well."

"I, then, am that sister!"

"You!" exclaimed he, with a feeling of almost disappointment. "You that little Susan whom I loved so much!"

"If I were then called Susan," said she, "I have since then been called Marianne—there was much in that time to be forgotten."

"There was! there was!" said Reynolds, "but we will not think of it now. We will forget all the past just now ; some other time you shall tell me all, we will rejoice now in the present," said he, taking her now unresisting hand, and putting it within his.

"And you will see our poor father, then," said she, "and acknowledge him?"

He started, stopped short, and looked at her almost in horror.

"It is so, then!" she said reproachfully, "you refuse to acknowledge him!"

"How can this be?" said he, "is our father living? I thought that they had taken his life."

"No, thank God!" she returned, "he was transported ; but," she said, imagining that now she saw why her father had been treated as an impostor by

his son, "they never told you how it was really. I daresay he was but seldom spoken of."

"Never!" said Reynolds, "I never heard them speak of him; my feelings have always been so much considered. And he lives then, actually?"

"Yes, lives," said she, "and is so changed that even you—that nobody—need be ashamed of him—poor as he is. But he is so good, so gentle, his only fault is that he loves me too well, has adventured too much for me. Oh, how thankful I am that you will own him! I always thought you would. Often have I come to the shop, just to see you—you looked to me so good and amiable," said she, blushing, and looking affectionately in his face.

"I declare I never saw anybody's bonnet fit their heads so prettily as yours," exclaimed he, stopping suddenly, and letting go her arm. "Come, I must see this bonnet off," said he, suddenly untying the strings—"No, I won't crush the dear little bonnet, not I. I tell you what, you ought never to wear a bonnet; it's a sin and a shame to hide your head."

"Oh, give me my bonnet," said she, "you make me quite ashamed!"

"I shall not give up the bonnet till I have had a kiss," said he; and without further ceremony caught her in his arms, and kissed her forehead and lips.

"I tell you what," said he, "I really am sorry, after all, that you are my sister. I would a deal rather have had you for my wife."

"I'll come and keep your house for you," said she, "that I will; you have no notion what a good house-keeper I am."

"No, you shall not keep my house," said he, "else I know somebody that will be falling in love with

you, and then you will never care a jot for me. No, I shall put you under a glass case, and keep you all to myself."

Thus talked he; and Marianne, happier than ever she had been before in her life, walked by his side, addressing him as "William" and "brother" most affectionately, and thinking that she could not have patience to wait till her father's return. At length, in the midst of her happiness, one thought of regret came to her mind, and she said, "It was a great disappointment to my poor father to find my aunt dead. He hoped with her to find me a home."

Again Reynolds stopped. "Dead!" repeated he. "She is not dead. She is alive and well, and will love you dearly, that she will; and so will poor Aunt Dorothy. Come, we will go there at once—how I shall surprise them! Aunt Dorothy shall lay her hand on your head, and feel your face, and then she will know how lovely you are."

"Aunt Dorothy?" asked Marianne, "of her I never heard."

"I daresay you never did," said he. "She is blind, poor thing, and thus is not as active as her sister; but she is as good. You will love her dearly."

"Now I shall go right through the town," said he, "with you leaning on my arm, and only be sorry that I cannot tell everybody I meet that you are my sister." And so he would have done, had he met anybody whom he knew; but it was one of those days when one chances to meet nobody when nobody seems to be out: so he reached his aunts' door without remark or interruption.

"Now I shall astonish the old ladies," said he, rushing in. "Guess what I have brought you," said

he, leaving Marianne in the outer room. The old ladies were very indulgent to their nephew; they guessed all kinds of things, but could not come near the truth. At length he went out, and returned with Marianne, saying, "My dear aunts, I introduce to you your niece."

It was a most complete shock—they thought that he was married, and that this was his wife. "Your wife?" asked they.

"No," returned he, "not my wife, I wish it were, but my sister, that sweet little sister Susan of whom I used to talk so much. Is she not sweet and charming, and does she not look good and loveable?"

"Sit down, sit down, my dear," said Joanna, who, though taken so by surprise, could not help seeing how confused and agitated the poor girl seemed.

Reynolds, who was quite vehement in his delight, would not, however, let her sit down till she had taken off her cloak and bonnet, that they might see," he said, "what a sweet little sister she was."

Poor Marianne, more confused now than ever, took the seat which Joanna offered to her. She was more confused and agitated every moment. That Reynolds was her brother she had never doubted for a moment; but this surely was not the aunt which she had heard described by her mother. This aunt had never been married surely! she wore no wedding-ring. The most fearful misgivings came over her mind; she felt almost faint with apprehension. "And where then is Mrs Osborne?" asked she with anxious fear.

"My dear," said Joanna, "Mrs. Osborne has been dead these four years."

"She was my aunt! I have made some strange, some frightful mistake," said she, rising, and almost

bursting into tears. "Tell me," she said, addressing Reynolds, "were you not born with the name of Edwards, whatever you may now be called?"

"This is the daughter of poor Mrs. Edwards," whispered Joanna to her sister, who, though blind, took the most lively interest in what went forward.

Reynolds made no reply—a strange light burst in upon his mind also, and a reality of happiness filled his heart—but at that moment he could not have expressed it.

"Oh, I have made some great, some frightful mistake!" again exclaimed the poor girl, looking round her.

Joanna ran, and taking her hand, said with a look of infinite kindness, "No, my dear, you have made no great mistake after all; you are right in one respect—you are among kind friends; we were friends of your mother's—friends of your aunt's—we will be friends also to you."

These words were meant to be consolatory. Marianne felt that they were spoken in the very spirit of kindness, but the presence of the young man troubled her beyond words; she feared to ask who he was, and how it was possible that this mistake could have been made between them; she dared not lift up her eyes to him. He too was bewildered in his turn—this, then, was not his sister, but Williams's; she had mistaken him for Williams. The truth filled him with rapture; his heart from the first had told him that he wished in her something dearer than a sister. He almost shrunk back at the thought of the familiarity which he had used towards her. He saw how she felt too; they stood in a very painful and embarrassing relationship to each other. He rose, and not

venturing even a glance at her, said that he would leave the young lady with his aunts. A cup of their excellent tea would do her good. In the evening he would return.

The quiet kindness of those amiable sisters, on whose every action sincerity was stamped, reassured the poor girl. They asked her no questions regarding herself, but talked of the bright young days of her mother, when they three had been happy, thoughtless girls together. They spoke of her aunt and uncle Osborne, as her mother had done; and when she asked of her brother, they told her nothing but what was good of him. He had been the companion and friend of William Reynolds, their nephew, for these ten years or more. Their nephew was the best young man in the world—on this subject they never were tired of speaking—they did not know what an agony it was to the poor girl. At length, in the fulness of her heart, she told all that had passed between them—her frequent visits to the shop, her hope of surprising her father in making themselves known to him, and being acknowledged by him, (of his unsuccessful attempts she said nothing,) and, now, what had she done? claimed a wrong relation—made herself appear forward and ridiculous, and all the time he must have known how inapplicable every word she uttered was to him. Oh! why had he allowed her thus to commit herself—thus to betray her father's secret?

The sisters could enter into her feelings—and to show their confidence in her, as well as to excuse their nephew, they told her what hitherto they had told to none—that their nephew's early history and family connexions bore sufficient resemblance to those of her brother, to make the mistake which had occur-

red so easy at first. Thus they proved to her that they thought her worthy of their confidence. In return she gave them hers; she told of their life in Australia; of her mother's goodness and industry, and her father's hardships and sufferings; how his spirit was broken by his disgrace, and how home-sick he was for England. Her mother lived in a school, and by her services paid for the education of her daughter. She did more than that—she gave daily lessons in Sydney, where they lived, and saved money. Anxiety and excessive labour, however, at length preyed upon her health; she had some kind friends, and by them her death was made as easy as possible. She had no anxiety about her daughter, for many desired to befriend her: her wish, however, was that she should return to England; she left written instructions to her husband, with three hundred pounds for this purpose; she left her daughter as a legacy to her beloved Aunt Osborne. Four years after her death, the father's term of transportation expired. He yearned to be back in his native land, and, taking his daughter and the money, embarked in one of the first ships sailing for London.

“In England,” said his daughter, “he flattered himself, that, broken-down though he was in spirit and constitution, he could begin a new career. On the voyage he spoke with the utmost impatience of re-union with his son, of whom he was very fond. His nature was softened, rather than hardened, by calamity; he often wept like a child. He loved her,” she said, “dearly, and was the most indulgent of fathers, and had formed, she could not tell what extravagant notions of her prosperity in England. He talked of London almost as the nursery song does, as

if the streets were paved with gold, Scarcely, however, had they landed in England, when he returned home to his lodgings almost on the verge of despair.

He was again a ruined man, almost pennyless. How it happened she could not tell; she suspected that he had fallen into the hands of designing gamblers who had robbed him of all. He was in despair; his health gave way, and, at the suggestion of the kind woman with whom they lodged, she began to paint miniatures and make fancy-work. She worked incessantly, and made a large stock of things, which she sold at good prices to the bazaars and shops. A fellow-lodger, who took a great fancy to her father, and who supported himself by dealing in common stationery, was then ill, and shortly after died, leaving to her father his little stock in trade, and his recipes for ink and sealing-wax. This and her fancy-work and painting had since then supported them. As soon as he was better in health, and had somewhat recovered his spirits, they came down here, intending to make themselves known to her mother's sister; she, however, was dead. And, then, as to her brother—"poor Marianne blushed deeply—"yes, indeed, what a strange blunder she had made!"

Such was her narrative; and the two sisters, even the blind one, were as much charmed with her as their nephew had been. Pretty she was, beyond words; and she was wise, and clever, and cheerful-hearted, had had sorrow enough to have bowed her down to the earth, and yet she was as gay as a bird: the truth was, there was a well-spring of gladness in her heart, and that was the spirit of love that never wearied in well-doing. She was a very jewel of a human being, and so neat and fairy-like withal, and

had such pretty turns and ways with her that were quite natural to her, and looked so arch and good-tempered, that it put one in humor with life and one's-self, only to look at her. She was a perfect mistress of the art of pleasing—it was born to her, and therefore it was so easy.

She stopped all night at the Miss Kendricks. Their little maid went to Mrs. Cope's to say so, and to bring her night-things; and Reynolds never got home that night till the clock was on the stroke of one.

CHAPTER III.

AGAIN, OLD AND NEW ACQUAINTANCE.

We have not now seen anything of Williams for some time; not, in fact, for seven years. Time goes on with such strange rapidity now-a-days! Seven years it is since we saw either him or Jessie Bannerman. We will, first of all, inquire after him, and know something of the workings of his mind, for, if we are not mistaken, he must in some things be changed, since we saw him last. We have long known his growing aversion to trade—there is nothing at all remarkable in that. But as concerns Jessie, we must make some inquiries. This, then, is what regards her.

When all that great affair of the players occurred, his acquaintance with Jessie came to the knowledge of the Osbornes, and the painful circumstances regarding their nephew that came to their knowledge with it, caused them to imagine the worst things of Jessie. It was in vain, when he had confessed his love-engagement, that he tried to place her character in its true light. They could not, and did not, believe what he said. They regarded her as the most

designing and artful of *intriguantes*, only the more detestable because she had worn the mask of innocence and virtue. Williams yielded to the storm against her. The storm blew over ; the sunshine of his good relation's favour again fell upon him. The time of his apprenticeship expired ; he was sent into the world to look about him, not to labour. Poor Mrs. Osborne's health began to give way, however, and then he was recalled ; her husband had not a thought for anything but her ; they took their adopted son with them, and went from place to place to regain, if possible, her health. She grew only worse and worse, and died, blessing her nephew for having given up his inclinations to please her. In reality, however, he had not given up his inclinations from any sense of duty ; he had only become indifferent about them. He had begun to look back to the days of his acquaintance with Jessie, and his jealousy of Tom Bassett, as of days which it was as well to forget ; not but that certain uneasy qualms came over his heart when he thought of the fair Jessie, and his plighted faith to her. But sufficient for the day is the evil thereof, thought he, and left it to care for itself. The appointed day at length came—the fifth anniversary of that strange Christmas day at Alton, and he had curiosity enough to inquire at the Post-office if there were a letter for him. There was a letter from Jessie, and it ran thus :—

“ Punctually at the time fixed I now write. A few words are enough. I will deal candidly with you. Life has gone variously with me since we parted. I have now nothing more valuable to offer you than love and gratitude. Wealth, however, in comparison of these treasures of life, is mere dust.

Are you ready and willing to fulfil your engagement? I have been true to you. If there be a moment's doubt on your mind, you are free. J. B."

Such was her letter. Williams sat and pondered. It troubled him; but then could he really marry, and bring home as his wife, that girl against whom so much had been said? No, he never could! besides, what would his uncle say?—what would Mrs. Proctor, what would everybody say? It was a very silly affair altogether—a boyish folly. People could not live on love and gratitude; if there were plenty of money, it would be a different affair. No, no, he must put an end to it at once.

He wrote. His letter might have served as a model for the Complete Letter-Writer. He spoke most feelingly of the death of his aunt, of his sense of duty to her, of the force of circumstances, of his own future and present dependence on his uncle, of the sacrifice he had been compelled to make of his feelings, of his unworthiness of her, of the certainty that she would meet with one much more deserving; in short, the letter said, as plainly as letter could say, that, to use a common phrase, he desired to wash his hands of the whole thing.

He heard no more from her. She sent no letter of reproach or remonstrance; and he began to congratulate himself on having so well got rid of the connection.

Not long after this, his uncle's death left him very unexpectedly possessed of so handsome a legacy as gave him quite another position in life. He began to take ambitious views, but still he was man of the world enough to bear his greatness with a very philo-

sophical calmness, and had it been twenty times the sum, he would have done the same. What infinite folly seemed now all his connection with players and all such low people ! It seemed to him a merciful deliverance to have done with Jessie Bannerman.

He renewed his acquaintance with Tom Bassett, who was now a prosperous lawyer, living on the sunny side of life, in the pleasant little town of Burton-on-Trent. Tom was a very prosperous man, and had just married the daughter of a rich country gentleman. A prosperous country banker too was the elder brother, with a fine country-seat as well as his house in the county-town. The Bassetts were people with whom it was creditable to associate, and with them Williams talked of investments and purchases. He began to turn his mind to the buying of a country-house. Though his name was the first in the firm, and stood in great gold letters over the shop-door, he was very rarely now at the shop—came now and then as a convenience—dined there and slept there occasionally, but passed most of his time in a lovely cottage ornée, which he had taken furnished, by the month, near Burton.

Williams cultivated the Bassetts' acquaintance with more zeal than they his. All at once, however, the lawyer became very zealous ; it had occurred to him that the family might make use of him on a particular occasion. Williams talked often of buying a small estate, with a good house upon it. The Bassetts had one to sell. It had belonged to the late Mrs. Bassett ; it was the property of the daughter, who now occupied it, but, finding it lonely during the winter, she wished to leave it. Her brothers advised her to sell it, and invest the money in railroad shares,

which would pay much better interest. Williams was just the purchaser they wanted, one who had plenty of money, and wanted to lay some of it out. They were charmed with the thought, and nothing could exceed the lawyer's friendliness. The next time Williams talked of investing some of his money in the purchase of a small estate, Bassett suddenly recollected that his sister might be induced to sell. Nothing in the world could be more desirable than her place, it was just what he wanted—in excellent condition, neither too large nor too small, with just the right quantity of land—a thorough gentleman's place. Williams's wishes were excited; and then he was informed that the sister was willing to sell; he might see the place; he should take a note to her the next day.

"He'll bite!" said Tom Bassett, chuckling to himself, and thinking that he had managed it famously. A word, now, respecting the lady herself. She was older than her brother, was in fact two-and-thirty, a really good, excellent creature, who, if she looked as old as she was, made you forget everything but how good she was. She was spoken of in her own neighbourhood as something quite uncommon. She had a school for the poor children, which she superintended herself every day; she visited the poor, lent them good books, and befriended them in a hundred ways; she was just the person calculated for a country clergyman's wife. Her brother had a husband in view for her, and desired nothing more than to get her away from her cottage in Needwood Forest, where, he said, she buried herself alive. He wanted her to marry a man who was willing to marry her, and who would have the means of putting busi-

ness in his brother-in-law's hands. She was a very strictly religious lady, too, and, some people said, had but little charity with the shortcomings of others—but they might be wrong, and we think they were.

The note of introduction which Williams brought from her brother, insured him quite a friendly reception; she ordered luncheon in for him, and then led him over her grounds, showed him her shrubbery-walks, and her rockery, and her grotto, and her summer-house, and her little pond with water-lilies, and her little greenhouse, and all her geraniums and her fuchsias and cape-heaths, and heaven knows what, growing in little heart-shaped beds, and standing on elegant green stages and rustic flower-stands; they sat down together on garden-seats side by side, and she pointed out views to him which he admired; they looked into the kitchen-garden, and talked about marrowfat peas, and the best mode of growing tomatoes; they peeped together into the melon-frame, and she gathered a melon which he carried into the house. It is astonishing how friendly they became in that short time. Then they came into the house, and he was taken into the nice little breakfast-room, where were her books; and the dining-room, and the little boudoir—it was too small for a drawing-room—where stood her harp, and her piano, and again her flowers; and there were pictures of herself smiling on the walls, here with her hair cut short, and in a prim white frock and pink sash, a demure little school-girl; and there at eighteen, fresh as a rosebud. Williams thought to himself what a wonder it was that she was not married at eighteen. After he had gone through the house, he went to take his leave of her, but he did not take his leave; they sat and

talked ; then he had forgotten some little particular about the garden-fence ; he begged again to see it ; the afternoon was charming—it was a long way to the end of the garden—he feared he might lose his way ; it was very polite of her indeed—she put on her bonnet and shawl, and walked with him again. All along those winding walks they went, on grass as smooth as velvet, and passed first one flower-stand and then another, up by the rockery and pool of water-lilies, till they reached the very end of the garden—and there they sat down in the summer-house. Miss Bassett was older than her visitor ; he was her brother's friend, so they felt quite at ease one with another, and the end of all this walking and talking was, that Williams, instead of negotiating about the purchase of the place, made her an offer of marriage—she had fifteen thousand pounds beside the place—he made her an offer of marriage, and was accepted.

He felt that he had done a good day's work—he never was so well satisfied with himself before. He mounted his horse, and rode home, not to his cottage at Burton, but to the shop. The side parlour, where in former days his uncle and aunt, good, quiet people, had passed their time, and received their friends, was now his own particular room. Nobody entered it without his permission, and there he transacted his private business : and there, as he sat that evening, in a large easy-chair, in the pride of his successful wooing, never dreaming of his father, came that father, for the first time, to claim his love and his compassion. Had Mr. Osborne risen from the dead to snatch from him his twenty thousand pounds of legacy, the shock could hardly have been greater than it was, when that man, who seemed to belong to

the class of genteel beggars, or broken-down tradesmen, stepped forward, and in words almost inarticulate from emotion, said in a hollow voice, "William ! my son ! I am your father !"

It might, or it might not, be so—the stranger bore no resemblance to his father, as he remembered him ; but, at all events, the rencontre was unpleasant. He assumed his coldest air ; he seemed to disbelieve ; he refused to look at any documents which the stranger produced ; he said he had an engagement, looked at his watch, and rose from his chair. The father, who was much cut down, wept ; and the son, disturbed and displeased, and yet troubled with the apprehension that it might be true, gave him two guineas, and begged that he might not hear of him again ; he really could not thus be molested—it was extremely unpleasant.

The poor man walked submissively away ; he felt in the depths of his soul how hard it is for the poor to take hold on the souls of the rich. Again and again they met, and Williams, who, of all things, saw how undesirable was such a claimant and such a connection, shut his heart against conviction, and doled out relief as if to a common importunate beggar. The father grew angry, rose in his demands, talked of an appeal to the magistrates to have his claim on his son enforced : and the son, on his part, who, however, would have made any sacrifice rather than that the thing should become public at all, threatened to have the father prosecuted as an impostor.

During these hard contests between father and son, the Bassett brothers heard, with the utmost amazement and vexation, of the engagement between their sister and Williams. They were fairly taken in their

own net, and were only the more angry from that fact. Every argument now that could be advanced against Williams was brought forward—his being, as it were, *nobody*—his early connection with the players—his shop. But these arguments had no weight with the lady; she was not a child, she said, to be turned about by the first adverse opinion; she had chosen him in the maturity of her judgment; she had no fear but that he was of honest descent; and, in spite of old scandals, in spite of the shop, it was her firm intention to unite herself to him. For a short time the brothers were silent; but again they came forward triumphantly against Williams, full of the most fearful anxiety for their sister. They had been making inquiries—a rumour had reached them, they were themselves convinced of the truth of it—Williams was the son of a convict swindler! the son of that Edwards who was transported sixteen years ago for forgery. He had been adopted by the Osbornes, and did not bear even his own name! Their sister never should marry the son of a convict—they would oppose it in every way—she might turn Catholic, and enter a convent, but marry him she never should.

Thus the brothers wrote to her, and at the very same time poor Edwards wrote to his son a letter of humility and prayer. He was ill, he said: his daughter was wearing herself away over her work, which brought her no profit. If he, the son, would only allow them a hundred pounds a year, to be paid by a respectable banker, they would quit the town for ever, to live in some quiet, secluded place, where he should never hear of them more. Oh! for the love of mercy, would he but do this?

This letter was returned unopened and unanswered, and it was at this crisis that poor Edwards, as we have seen, disheartened and disappointed, left home with his camlet bag for an absence of two or three days. Williams was by no means in an easy state of mind, when a letter came to him from Miss Bassett, which, as we may believe, considerably agitated him. It was short, but still it said much. "Mere rank," she said, "was of no value in her mind, nor was great wealth; and, therefore, as he knew, she had made light of her brothers' objections against him on the score of his being of ordinary birth, and connected with trade: but an unsullied name and a fearlessly upright character were another thing; she now, therefore, put it to him solemnly, as he would answer before heaven—No; she would not put it thus," she said, "she would merely put it to his honour, to his regard for her, was he, or was he not, the son of that unhappy convict, Edwards, who was married to Miss Phillips, the sister of Mrs. Osborne?"

Terror now fell upon him strong as an armed man. His first thought was to get his father out of the way at any cost. He actually went to Mrs. Cope's, and asked to see him. He was out—his daughter was out; there was nothing to be done then, and, therefore, he sat down and wrote his answer to the lady, whom he was resolved not to lose. He talked of malice, and false friendship, and base attempts which were made to ruin him in her eyes, all which he said he defied. He deplored himself as the most unfortunate of men, because having been early left an orphan, he himself had not known his parents. He prized an unsullied name as much as she did, and would make one for himself. With her love, and for her

love, he could do anything ; without it he should be the veriest outcast in the world ! *He was not the son of that unfortunate man, Edwards !* and he earnestly besought her to close her ears against that malice which was bent upon ruining him. “ He felt,” he said, “ that, once united, they should be happy ; till then, endless plans would be formed to separate them. Might he beseech of her at once to set this malice at defiance by allowing their marriage to take place immediately.”

It was a bold letter. He trembled as he despatched it. The next post brought him an answer. “ Thank you ; you have taken a load from my heart. I knew that you had not willingly deceived me, and I believe you. But, Edward, shall I now confess my weakness—had you, fearing to speak a falsehood, even for a great reward, said, ‘ Yes, I am the son of that unhappy convict, and in reality I bear his name,’—I could not have abandoned you. Oh, my friend, you have gained great power over me—you are very dear to me, and I would have stood by your side to the last ; and if the world had upbraided you, it should have upbraided me also. But, thank God, it need not be so. I will be candid with you. My brothers are extremely inveterate against you. Their consent to our marriage will not be obtained, I fear. I wish to see you soon. Come over for an hour to-morrow.”

There are no reproofs to a heart not naturally bad, so severe as those of kindness. Williams sat silent and self-accused. All his life long it seemed to him that he had lived in the midst of kindness, which he had ill requited. He thought of Jessie Bannerman—oh how often had Miss Bassett reminded him of Jessie in her calm truthfulness ! he thought of his good aunt and uncle, how he had cheated and deceived

them. He was a moral coward; he had not the courage to do right—and he sat now humbled and chastised by his conscience. Oh that I had dared to speak the truth! Oh that I had but had the courage to speak the truth—that I had but had faith in the real greatness and goodness of her soul! I am a liar and a cheat, let me bear as fair a face to the world as I may, and a day will come when all my falsehood will come to light!

The next day he set off to the Forest for the interview which she desired, but not before he again made inquiries after the lodger at Mrs. Cope's, but the lodger was not returned, and, racked with the apprehension of something terrible hanging over him, he set out. He was prepared for some dreadful catastrophe, and felt more like a criminal going to judgment, than a lover on his way to arrange with a loving mistress for an early marriage. But what whips and stings has an evil conscience—how it torments with everlasting suggestions; suppose Miss Bassett should meet him with the full knowledge of all his baseness—suppose his father had actually been with her brothers, or herself—suppose he should be there with her, and she should confront them face to face! What should he do? Had he not now better go and throw himself at her feet, and confess all? Could she indeed love him after such a proof of his weakness? Or should he boldly adhere to his lie, and dare all consequences? He could not tell—he knew not what to do—he was like a weed on the tempestuous water, tossed here and there. A bitter curse is a mind ever wavering between right and wrong! and thus—miserable, vacillating, apprehensive, repentant, and yet ready to commit fresh sin to save himself, he went on.

As he rode slowly up through the plantations to the front of the cottage, a tall, but bending figure, was slowly passing down a side walk from the back premises. The rusty, but well-preserved black suit, the old hat, the blue camlet bag, he recognised them instantly. It was as if a dagger had pierced through his heart. He stopped his horse instantly—he had better at once fly than face her—his father had really been there—had revealed all, no doubt—he had not yet been seen from the house—there was time to fly—shame and terror overwhelmed him.

“Good morning, sir,” said the cheerful voice of the gardener. “Shall I lead your horse up to the stable? Missis is in the little flower-garden.”

The gardener’s voice reassured him, so did his words; Miss Bassett was in the garden—she had not, then, seen his father. “What a coward apprehension has made of me!” thought he, and rode up to the house, bidding the gardener say nothing of his being come, and he would join Miss Bassett presently.

He was glad of this respite to recover himself; the servants received him like a welcome guest at the house; servants by instinct learn the tone of their employers’ feelings—he knew that at present all was right.

“What did the old man want, with the blue bag, who was here just now?” asked he.

“He has left a packet for the lady,” the servant replied.

“The packet is for me—let me have it instantly,” said he in a spasm of fear. “Fly, quick!”

The servant, interpreting his impatience to be that of a lover, flew quickly, as he desired, to put into his hand one of those small packets of stationery which

poor Edwards carried about. "To the inhabitant of this house," he read on the outside. Again there seemed something pitiful in his fear. There was nothing but innocent pens, sealing-wax, and wafers, inclosed in a wrapper, on which was printed, "All these for one shilling. The maker, who humbly solicits the benevolent to purchase, will call again to-morrow."

"The man is poor, very poor," said Williams, wrapping up the box again. "When he calls, give him this," said he, giving the servant a guinea—"he is very poor, though importunately troublesome; bid him not to come here again, however!"

Miss Bassett, so far from having any quarrel with her lover, or any suspicion of wrong against him, received him with the most marked, yet delicate kindness. Not one word did she say of the painful subject of their letters, but she spoke with tears of the harshness and unkindness of her brothers. They had quarrelled with her—she had no hope of reconciliation with them—she wished to leave the neighbourhood. Williams proposed their immediate marriage—she made no opposition—she felt as if she had no friend but himself. They arranged their plans rapidly. Williams, amazed at his own good fortune, was quite at his ease. The marriage, it was agreed, should take place, secretly, early in the next week—they would go at once to London, and from thence her brothers should know that their opposition was useless, and from London they would go to the Continent, where they would remain till the family displeasure had cooled.

Whilst thus arranging so agreeably his affairs with his affianced bride, his mind was busy about his

father, and he formed a plan, which, under the better feeling inspired by the secret influence of this excellent woman, was not without kindness. He gave a sealed paper to the servant, which he ordered her to give to the man, and then, after waiting to ascertain that it was delivered into his hand, he took leave of his bride, to meet her again only for the marriage.

From the Forest Lodge he went to the Three Queens, in Burton, where, as he expected, the poor man with the camlet bag was not long in making his appearance also. They had a long interview, which ended apparently most amicably. They both left Burton that night—Edwards by one coach, and his son by another.

CHAPTER IV.

THEY ARE OFF.—THEY ARE MARRIED.

It was two days after this before he reached home. He came by the Birmingham coach, but he was so entirely his own master, that nobody ever thought of asking wherefore he had been there. Reynolds, however, who had been looking for him every hour since the discovery he had made regarding his sister, met him at the shop-door with that sort of impatient good-news countenance, which seems to say, "Here I am! ask me what I have got to tell!" But Williams did not ask, and at last Reynolds, who could contain no longer, invited him to a private conference, and then began in a low voice of the most heartfelt joy—"I say, my good fellow, do you know that your sister is in this town? The most beautiful little angel that ever was seen, and as good as she is beautiful! And

do you know," added he in a more measured tone, "that—your father is here too?"

Williams turned pale as death, and Reynolds attributing this to shame regarding his father's disgrace, wished he only knew how to show his good and kind intentions. "I am sure, my dear fellow," he began, "if I were in your place, I would not let it trouble me a bit; the world need not know anything about it; and to make you quite at ease with me on the subject, I will confess something to you. I too have had sorrow in my family, and deeper sorrow than yours, for here is your father come back, with time, and opportunity, and willingness to retrieve his character in life. My poor father, alas, had not time hardly to repent. You and I are old friends; there need be no secrets between us, though nobody else need know about your poor father—nobody, indeed, ever dreams that this is your father—nobody but Miss Kendricks and myself."

"What, in the fiend's name, does all this mean?" demanded Williams, again assaulted on this fearful subject from a quarter where he least expected it.

"What does it mean?" repeated Reynolds, quite taken aback. "Why, that your father is come back, and that your sister is here, and that my aunt Kendricks can see in her a strong likeness to your mother."

Reynolds had never in his life before mentioned to Williams suspicions of his parentage, and he now said, "I've known it long, Williams, that Edwards was your father, and it's no use trying to impose upon me; nor really, if you knew me, would you think it needful to try; so let us deal openly with one another—here are your father and sister."

"They are impostors," interrupted Williams, in a low, but firm voice. "Arch impostors; and don't you go and let your good-nature believe every artful lie that is told you. They are impostors, I tell you; I have seen him, and I am mistaken if he be not off pretty handily."

"And do you actually pretend not to believe it?" cried Reynolds, growing quite warm. "I appeal to your conscience, Williams, whether, in the face of heaven, you dare to disown them. They are not impostors, and that you know! How dare you, with your plenty,—or even if you had to slave for your daily bread it would be the same thing,—how dare you cast your father into poverty, perhaps into crime, and what is ten thousand times worse, cast that lovely creature, your own sister, who is pure as the very stars of heaven, friendless upon the world? I will stand between you and your pride, Williams, if pride it be, or your false shame, or want of moral courage, or whatever it is, and force you to do them right! They are your own flesh and blood, and as you hope for the blessing of God on your own life and undertakings, be just to them."

Williams heard all in gloomy silence, and then inquired where he had seen "these people."

Reynolds related what had occurred between Marianne and himself, and showed how the peculiar circumstances of his own early life had rendered him, as it were, innocently a party in the misunderstanding; he told how pleased his aunt Kendricks had been with her, and how they had kept her at their house for one, if not two, nights.

A peculiar smile passed over Williams's countenance, which Reynolds could not understand. "What

a fool the girl must be, if this be not a double-dyed piece of artifice," said he. "And how famously you have been imposed upon!"

With these words he left him, and Reynolds, burning with indignation at what he felt to be his cold-blooded pride, felt, nevertheless, an uncomfortable query in his own heart—"And can I, after all, have been duped?"

"No! no! no!" said every sense of honesty and sincerity in his own breast. "As soon would I disbelieve the sun in heaven as that girl." He was sure he was right, and, within half an hour, set off to Mrs. Cope's, to see both father and daughter. He was bent upon obtaining from them such evidences as Williams should not gainsay. He knew enough of Williams to believe him capable of prevarication and falsehood, but he had great faith also in the good that was in him, and on that he resolved to work—in the meantime he must see these two—he wanted to see father and daughter together, to question and cross-question, to know how they were in health, to cheer up their spirits, in short, he was for the first time in his life in love—he wanted to see his mistress.

Williams on his part did not trouble himself about them. He had plenty of business of other kinds on his hands. He was busy about his marriage. He wrote to his banker, to his lawyer, and to his tailor; there was a world of business to be done in the next few days.

Great was Reynolds's astonishment, and almost horror, when, on passing the little parlour window at Mrs. Cope's, he saw, instead of the miniatures, and profiles, and pretty bags and rugs, which were usually arranged there—two caps on wooden stands, and two

pieces of printed cotton, and one of shot-silk, which were in progress of gown-making. Mrs. Cope was in possession of her little parlour again; her lodgers were gone!

“What; was he in your debt for sealing-wax and such things?” asked Mrs. Cope, in reply to Reynolds’s sudden exclamation at hearing that they left the day before.

“Where are they gone?” he inquired.

Mrs. Cope could not tell; it seemed all a sudden thing; the old gentleman had come home after being away for three days. He seemed very poorly and out of spirits when he went, but when he came back he was quite another person; he sent out for half a pound of cheese, a beefsteak, and a pot of porter, and had a good supper. He seemed to have plenty of money; he was up all night packing up his things. The daughter was not half as cheerful; she sat painting at those things for Mrs. Bishop, and sweet pretty things they were. Mrs. Cope’s girl took them home. Mrs. Bishop, she said, wanted something else painted, and she wished her to go there, and then she would pay her for them all together. The father, however, would not let her go, nor somewhere else, where she wanted to go, and she cried even—but the old gentleman was angry, and would not let her. He said there was not time. He said that he had met with a friend, and that they must meet him that day—so they went by coach to Lichfield, he outside, and she in. She seemed quite down-hearted at going, and said that Mrs. Cope must take, for her own trouble, the guinea and a half which Mrs. Bishop owed, and she had left a bag worked with beads, and a very pretty bunch of wax roses for Miss Kendricks, with her

love, and she should never forget their kindness. Mrs. Cope said that she took shame to herself for not having been down with them, but one of her young women was ill, and she was so full of work—but she meant, if she could get a bit of time, to take them that night.

Reynolds said that he would save her the trouble, that he was going to his aunt's, and would carry them with him.

Mrs. Cope's tidings quite upset him—he thought of Williams's words—"They are impostors. I have seen him, and I am mistaken if they are not speedily off." Off they certainly were, and he had no doubt but that Williams had a hand in it; but that they were impostors he could not believe. His aunts were of his opinion, and without knowing their nephew's private reasons for anxiety, seconded all that he said in behalf of their truth. It was impossible that they could be impostors, the young lady was too much like her own mother for that. Oh no; Williams knew very well where they were; he had sent them out of the way, and, no doubt, would provide for them; there seemed to them nothing so strange in his wishing them not to appear just now. Did not people say that he was paying his addresses to Lawyer Bassett's sister? They could understand exactly how it was, only they must confess that he need not have told lies to an old friend, like their nephew, that he might have known would never make mischief or betray him in any way. But it was like Williams, they said, and they had no right to be surprised at it.

Reynolds became again easy in his mind, and returned home to prepare for the morrow, which was

May-fair day, when they would all be busy with country customers. He did not see Williams again that night, but he resolved on the very first opportunity to place the utmost confidence in him as regarded himself; to confess his love for his sister, which he could not doubt being agreeable to him, and obtaining from him a knowledge of their residence, to lose no time in making her an offer of his heart and hand. He would by this means prove to Williams how little he thought of the painful past as regarded his father—nay, on his marriage, he would enter into a bond on behalf of his wife, to make some provision for the old man. He would in every way do that which was generous and honourable, and this he would tell Williams. Nothing puts one in such good humour with one's-self and all the world as the intention of doing something remarkably generous, especially when one can serve one's-self at the same time. It was this feeling which made Reynolds alert and cheerful all the day. The country people said, "What a nice gentleman he was!" He listened to all kinds of weariful histories about diseases in cattle and children, and old folks; he prescribed for dry-rot in houses, and the fly in turnips; he did not sell even a penny-worth of turmeric without a pleasant word. Every customer was charmed with him; he "quite cut out" their old favourite, Mr. Isaacs, who happened to be rather out of humour that day, it must be confessed. At the end of the day, Mr. Reynolds informed his partner that there never had been such a day since he had known the shop; it had been quite crowded all day: and on adding up the day's receipts, besides booking, it was half as much again as that day last year.

Mr. Isaacs said it need, for that Williams had suddenly called for two hundred pounds out of the business, which he said had worried him no little. Williams was gone off with a good deal of luggage, and had said that he should not be back at present, but that he would write. Here was news of astonishment for Reynolds! He was gone, no doubt, after his father and sister; the two hundred pounds was for their use; he was gone to settle them comfortably somewhere; he rose at once fifty per cent. in his young partner's estimation; he was welcome to draw two hundred pounds from the business; Reynolds would almost have given it to him. These were his thoughts, and he replied cheerfully to his senior, "Well, I don't see that we need trouble ourselves about that; he takes no part in the business now, and we are just as well without him as with him."

"But," said Mr. Isaacs angrily, "it's an unpleasant thing to have money drawn out at a minute's warning—to be sure the firm has money in the bank—but with his twenty thousand pounds—and he a bachelor—he should not do it!"

"Here is news!" exclaimed Reynolds within a very few days, looking up from the London paper which he was reading. "Now listen, Mr. Isaacs, and I shall amaze you,—and he read—'On Saturday, the 7th inst., at St. George's, Hanover Square, Edward Lewis Williams, Esquire, of Utceter, to Emmeline, sole daughter of the late George Vernon Bassett, Esquire, of Henshall Hall, Staffordshire.'"

"And he really is married, is he?" exclaimed the old man. "At St. George's, Hanover Square! Bless me!"

"Well, here's a bit of news!" exclaimed all the

Mrs. Proctors and Mrs. Morleys of Utceter and of Burton-on-Trent. “Here’s a bit of news that will take a deal of talking over. Married are they after a six weeks’ courtship, and she gone off to London, pious as she was reckoned, all on the sly, with only her maid; why, it is not much better than being married at Gretna Green;” and everybody’s tongue was set in motion.

“And she really *has* married him after all!” exclaimed the two brothers Bassett. “*After all*, has married the son of a convict! Well, we hope they’ll go abroad, and live abroad too, and never come back again!”

“And yet,” said they a week after the first anger, “we must not say anything about his father—for the credit of the family we must not! And, seeing she was determined to marry him, it was almost a pity that we said so much—but after all it was only among ourselves, so there is no great harm done—but we wish to heaven that they may live abroad altogether!”

The new Mrs. Williams wrote from London to her brother at Burton, and informed him that it was the joint wish of herself and her husband that the Lodge should be now let for a term of years; that the furniture should be sold by auction, and her books, pictures, musical instruments, &c., should be deposited in the hands of certain persons whom she named. It was their intention, she said, to be absent for some years, and she felt sure that her dear brother, in accordance with his usual kindness to her, would transact this business for them, and it was the wish of her husband that he (the lawyer) should remunerate himself for all his trouble out

of the rent, which might lie in his hands till called for.

It was evidently the intention of Mr. and Mrs. Williams to keep up a good understanding with her family ; the family were satisfied that it should be so, but, as a means of keeping them abroad, they soon found a good tenant, for a term of years, for the very pretty Forest Lodge.

CHAPTER V.

ANOTHER OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

WE hope our readers are disposed to like Mrs. Williams ; she was a good woman ; she had some of those sterling qualities which he had not, but which always in others had a great influence on him ; it is strange to say it, but it is, nevertheless, true, her first charm to his feelings was that singular transparency and evident truthfulness of mind and character which he had always felt so strongly in Jessie Bannerman. They both had the power of awakening the better part of his nature, of producing in him, as it were, an acquiescence to good. He had deceived his wife, it is true ; he had fallen into the gulf of falsehood, that fatal gulf which, it seemed to him, ever lay before him. And oh, what a bitter weight of self-condemnation lay upon his soul for it ; how did it come between him and his happiness, between her love and his peace of mind. “ *Would that I had wist !* ” is the most painful expression of a saddened spirit—for it implies that we have been the fashioners of our own anguish.

We must now see them in London. All the world was then talking of Mademoiselle Angela. She was

a young actress ; the most beautiful of women, according to report, and the most accomplished of actresses. She had been abroad, in Petersburg and Paris, and had created an extraordinary sensation there. Her fame had come before her : people who had seen her abroad raved about her in London, and now she was come, in the month of May, in the full blaze of the London season, and had at once taken the heart of the whole town. Her portraits were in the windows ; she set the fashion in caps and gowns ; her voice, her attitudes, her smiles were the theme of every one's admiration ; but, more than all, was talked of her beautiful character. Her life, it was said, had been as strange as a fairy tale ; she had gone through poverty, hardship, and temptation of every kind, but all had been unable to tarnish the pure gold of her nature. She was, fame said, the most gifted and best of human beings ; people told endless anecdotes about her ; her life was so pure, yet brilliant, and people were so enthusiastic about her, that one might have thought her sent down from heaven to make goodness fashionable.

Mrs. Williams, who had from principle a terror of the stage, refused, spite of the entreaties of their London acquaintance, to attend the theatre. Chance had led them among a circle of people who were most theatrically inclined, and who were going to one theatre or another every night. Williams, who had a strong desire to join them, declined, for some time, from regard to his wife. She became aware, however, at length, of the self-denial he had practised for her sake, and insisted upon it that he should go to see this wonderful phoenix, of which the world talked so much. He was to accompany a party, which was to

occupy one of the stage-boxes. The gentlemen took with them bouquets and wreaths of flowers, to fling as offerings at the feet of the queen of the night : rings, it was said, and ornaments of great value, had frequently been conveyed to her feet in this way, and Mrs Williams gave to her husband a small wreath of myrtle and jasmine, which, she said, if he found her to be as beautiful as she was said to be good, he was to fling to her also.

A strange, bewildering, dream-like feeling came over Williams as he stood behind the row of ladies of their party, waiting for the drawing up of the curtain. The orchestra played Mozart's overture to *Don Juan*. His mind went back to those strange, far-off days when he stood in the little theatre at Utceter, waiting for the drawing up of the curtain, to see her whom he then reckoned the angel of his life. Fancy is a very powerful and a very deceptive thing ; the great house seemed to dwarf itself down to the dimensions of the little one—the gay audience were the dowdy gentry of a country-town. The huge curtain drew up, and there, like the glorified image of the heroine of former days, stood the splendidly attired, and serenely beautiful Mademoiselle Angela. The whole house rose, and the gentlemen shouted for very enthusiasm ; the ladies waved their handkerchiefs, and the newspapers of the next morning said that nothing could exceed the rapture with which the young actress was received.

“I protest !” exclaimed one of the gentlemen in their box, “that Williams has been standing like a mummy all this time.”

Poor Williams ! and there was good reason why he had done so. A dizziness had come over him ; he fancied that he must have fainted, but nobody then

observed it. They said now that he looked pale ; he said that the theatre was so hot.

Everybody was engrossed by the piece, and he too looked on. It *was* Jessie Bannerman ; he saw it plainly ; the same being, who, sitting with him in the patten-maker's parlour, had told him her sad history ; the same who had gone with him on that Christmas-day to Alton Towers ; who had made that strange compact with him of trial and fidelity for five years ; the same who had been true to him for five years, and then offered him, herself, her love and her gratitude, and had been rejected by him ; and who, with her love and gratitude, had he but been worthy of them, would have conferred upon him wealth, splendour, honour, the world's renown, only to have been allied to her.

The piece was Othello. And now she came to the second scene of the fourth act, where Desdemona, on her knees before Othello, asserts her innocence.

She seemed to surpass even herself ; the public enthusiasm rose to the highest pitch ; flowers were rained down from every box near the stage, and came flying from pit and gallery.

"Now, Williams, fling down your garland to her," resounded distinctly on the stage from the box above. She cast her eye in the direction of the voice instantly ; their eyes met, it was but for a moment, but to Williams it seemed as if he had shrunk into nothingness before the clear, keen gaze of those beautiful eyes. He groaned inwardly ; he felt how little, how mean he was ; how wretched, how despicable had been all his aims in life. She rose higher and higher ; there was a majesty in her action, a thrilling tone in her voice that crushed him. He felt at once humbled

before her ; he felt again, as he had felt before, that high moral tone in her, which, combined with great intellectual power, is the very essence of the divine nature.

“How omnipotent is goodness ! how godlike.” he exclaimed inwardly. “How could I ever have been worthy of her !”

He stood, and gazed upon her, and wept like a child. People seemed to take no notice of him, they were so occupied by her and by themselves.

The theatre-going world said that she had never acted so well as on that night.

This discovery of Jessie Bannerman in the renowned Mademoiselle Angela was not a circumstance calculated to add to Williams’s matrimonial happiness. He drew invidious comparisons between the favourite actress and his wife, between himself now and that which he might have been had he married her. He was enraged with himself ; called himself fool and blockhead, and made himself very unhappy.

At the end of the month, as had been at first proposed, Mrs. Williams insisted on their going to Paris ; she was tired of hearing of Mademoiselle Angela ; she did not like her husband going so continually to the theatre, where she never accompanied him ; according to her notions of things, it was not right.

To Paris, therefore, they went.

“Edward, my love,” said his wife to him one day, not long after their arrival there, “will you be my father confessor ?”

“Can you, who are so good, have anything to confess ?” he exclaimed.

“Listen,” she said, “and you shall hear. I was jealous of Mademoiselle Angela.” He started. “Nay,

upon my word," she said, "you will make me think that I had cause. Mrs. Moorwood told me of your agitation when you saw her first. You know not, Edward," she said, "the anguish I have felt; I fancied that you were cold to me; I fancied that your heart seemed turned from me—there is something so entire, so true in a woman's love, Edward, and I was jealous of that fair Angela, who seemed to have deprived me of yours in return. Now I have been candid with you. I have told you my weakness; let there never be suspicion between us, and, as a proof that your love is not diminished, tell me, was Mademoiselle Angela known to you before?"

Without replying, he looked into his wife's face. His first impulse was to deny altogether the truth of her suspicion—was to deny any knowledge of the actress.

"Edward," continued she, solemnly, "answer me truly—love and falsehood cannot exist in the same bosom. The happiness of our whole life may depend on this moment—do not deceive me! You have loved Mademoiselle Angela!"

Again he felt that singular resemblance between his wife and Angela—that spirit of truth which had made him submissive before the spirit of a girl in former years. He felt that, sustained by this spirit, he dared to speak the truth, even to his own condemnation.

"Yes," he said, "you are right; I have loved her—and, perhaps, love her still; but oh! Emmeline, since we have thus spoken, you need not fear her. Truth is, indeed, a broad shield against sin. You need not fear her. I love her less dangerously, and you more truly. But you shall hear all." He then

related that which the reader already knows ; perhaps not in its fullest details—but still with that sufficient adherence to truth as left him guilty. Emmeline sat with her calm eyes fixed upon him—she did not speak one word to interrupt him.

“ Thank you, my beloved,” said she, when he had finished, and when, overcome by emotion, he sank his face upon his hands, and wept. “ Thank you, from this day forth a new covenant is made between us. We shall neither of us err greatly while we have courage to face the truth. You have given me the greatest proof of your love by placing confidence in me. May God Almighty enable me to make you happy !” She sank her head on the shoulder of her husband, and wept with him.

A new era in the life of our married pair might be dated from this time. Mademoiselle Angela was never mentioned between them, but she was the bond of their better understanding. One thing only embittered Williams’s life ; that was his falsehood regarding his father. Often and often he was on the point of confessing the whole terrible truth, and his own culpable weakness, but then he dared not ; she seemed so happy, she had such faith in him, the knowledge of this must blast all. It lay like a festering sore on his soul, and led him only into new difficulties and deceptions. He dreaded the arrival of letters ; his wife showed him all hers, and seemed to expect the same from him. She was one of those clear-headed, straightforward women who have a capacity for business ; she took the management of all their present affairs into her hands, and her husband, who had a decided distaste for business of every kind,

was quite willing that she should do so. But now and then came letters which she must not see. Reynolds wrote to him, begging most urgently for the address of that person who called himself Jervis; why he wanted it, he did not say, but stated merely that it was on a matter of vital importance to himself. This letter put Williams in a state of the greatest uneasiness; for what purpose could Reynolds want the address? Were the Bassetts reviving the old subject? Was Reynolds himself going to meddle in it? He wrote back a short reply. He knew nothing of the person calling himself Jervis, farther than that, to prevent the circulation of reports unpleasant to himself, he had caused him to remove to Birmingham. Reynolds must remember that he, Williams, had always considered him an impostor.

Next came a letter from Williams's father. He had obtained the address from the banker in London, who was empowered to pay his allowance. He wrote from Bath, whither he had removed from Birmingham, in consequence of the illness of his daughter. He had been obliged to consult physicians for her; her illness was expensive to him. He must trouble his son for a further advance of money to meet this exigency.

This letter, even more than the former, discomposed him, and, to silence this most fearful of correspondents, he sent him an order on his banker, not, however, without forbidding any further application to himself; and to his banker he also wrote, forbidding his address in future being furnished to this his annuitant.

After this, Williams changed his lodgings, and did not in future allow his letters to come to his residence. Early in the next year he removed from Paris to Vienna.

On the second day of their being in this city, and whilst yet at the inn, one of those singular coincidences occurred which are by no means as unfrequent as some persons imagine. They dined, as is customary, in a public room, where many persons were dining at separate tables. A party of gentlemen sat at a table beside them ; they were English, and were talking loudly. One of them was a Mr. Burndale, of London, a banker, and the conversation was about forgeries, when Mr. Burndale was appealed to.

“ By the bye, Burndale,” said one of the gentlemen, “ is it true that that fellow, Edwards, whom you transported some sixteen or eighteen years ago, for a forgery on your bank, is come back, and has opened some sort of eating-house or tavern at the West End ? ”

Long before thus much had been said, Williams felt as if the soup which he was eating would choke him. His wife, too, had heard what was said, and was almost as much agitated as himself ; for she knew that this was the man with whom her brothers had connected her husband.

“ Are you not well, love,” said she, tenderly ; “ shall we leave the room ? ”

He was not unwell, he said hastily, and called for wine, and the gentlemen went on : “ Yes, it was quite true ; he was come back ; somebody had advanced him money, and he had actually opened a tavern or gaming-house, or something of the kind ; it was astonishing,” they said, “ how some people got on through life.”

Williams drank wine and made the most violent efforts to look composed, and to a great degree he succeeded. His wife remembered what had passed between them on the subject before their marriage, and his agitation appeared natural ; she began a most cheerful conversation with him, and used every effort in her power to drive away all unpleasant thoughts.

The next day they left the inn. Mrs. Williams was expecting to become a mother in a few months ; they, therefore, took a suite of rooms for the summer, intending before winter to remove to Florence, where they proposed taking up their abode.

One thought for ever haunted Williams, and that was his father, and the discovery which, sooner or later, his wife would make. He loved her extremely ; Mademoiselle Angela was no longer her rival ; he would have given thousands, that he only had never deceived her ; but every day made it more difficult now to confess the truth. His letters never came to the house ; he dreaded going into public lest he should be recognised in some way ; he was become the slave of perpetual apprehension. He bought a horse and rode violently ; it was the only thing that seemed to remove him from himself ; yet he never returned home without fearing that the frightful secret was out. All this preyed upon his health ; he looked ill and haggard ; his wife grew anxious about him ; he assumed spirits which he did not feel, and was all the time miserable. To add to his anxiety, Reynolds still pursued him with letters, and at length came in person. He came with the most resolute purpose of dragging from Williams the secret of his father's residence. He came with tidings for which Williams

was not prepared—the happiness of his life depended upon his marriage with Williams's sister—he would not speak of her in any other character than as his sister; he defied him, before Heaven, to deny that she was so, or that *her* father was other than *his*. He was so firm, so much in earnest, that Williams quailed before him. Life and death, he said, was in his errand, and he would not be trifled with. He only wanted to be enabled to find them, and then Williams might cast them off for ever—might disown them—might lie before God and man; they should from that day want neither friend nor support, for he himself would maintain them. Williams told him honestly that which he knew; he had established them as he hoped permanently in Birmingham, and had secured to them a hundred a year by quarterly payments. They had left Birmingham, however, and gone to Bath, and after that he had incidentally learned they were in London, where the father had opened some kind of tavern at the West End—a mad, foolish scheme, said Williams, and that was honestly all he knew. Reynolds, on his part, knew as much, which he related: he had traced them from town to town, and at length to London, where, as was stated, the father had been unwise enough to enter into some sort of scheme, but not in a tavern or gaming-house, in what was designed for a small respectable coffee-house and news-room. He had had a stroke, however, which incapacitated him from business. The whole place was broken up—all was complete ruin—and after that, he and his daughter seemed lost amid the vastness of sorrow and disappointed hopes in London. Reynolds was a man, physically and morally, with

erves as of iron ; he was not to be daunted by difficulties, or impeded by obstacles of one kind or another, and now he stood before Williams like the personification of determined will, and demanded from him where was his sister ?

“ Would to Heaven I could tell you ! ” said Williams, with sincerity.

Reynolds did not believe him. Williams tried every means in his power to convince him ; offered him an unlimited order on his banker for their use ; but Reynolds rejected it. “ It is a mockery,” said he, indignantly, “ to offer money now, when you have compelled them into unknown misery and perhaps ruin ! ”

A violent quarrel ensued, and Reynolds returned to England, cursing what he considered the heartless, selfish, unnatural pride and unkindness of his partner, and resolved to spend his life, if needful, in rescuing the girl he loved so tenderly from the misery which seemed to encompass her.

It was impossible to keep from Mrs. Williams’s knowledge the fact that something unpleasant had caused this unexpected journey of her husband’s partner to such a distance, and no doubt Williams would have found the concealment of the truth much more difficult than he did, had not fortune favoured him ; his child was born, and the mother forgot every unpleasant thing in the joy of her first-born.

Months went on. A house was taken for them at Florence ; the day fixed for their journey was come. At the moment of departure a letter from England was put into Williams’s hand ; it was in a woman’s hand-writing, and had been sent merely directed to

his name through the English ambassador. It was from his sister, and was a most touching appeal to his humanity, if not to his affection. Her father, she said, had lost the use of one side; had lost his memory completely, and in part his speech—he was a pitiable and infirm object. She was making the most gigantic efforts in her power for their support; but she had no friends. She knew not the banking-house whence her father drew their quarterly payments, and her father's efforts to recall it were hopeless. Her own health was giving way, and she besought him, without loss of time, in the name of that Great Father before whom they must all one day answer for their deeds, to inform her of the name of his banker, and thus rescue them from the horrible misery which already stared them in the face. His heart was wrung as he hastily perused it. His wife came in at that moment; the carriage was at the door; the servants and the courier came bustling about; his wife said all was ready, and she was impatient to be off; he crumpled the letter hastily in his hand, gave his arm to his wife, and placed her in the carriage; the nurse and the child followed quickly, all was bustle and confusion; he took his seat; there were yet cloaks, and shawls, and travelling baskets, and little bags, and endless things to be looked after, for Mrs. Williams was one of those provident persons who cared for every want beforehand. Scarcely were they off, when Williams recalled the letter; it was not in his hand—it had not been in his hand for some time—where had he put it? He was alarmed; he quietly felt his own pockets, looked behind his wife, looked behind the nurse, but it was not to be seen.

He dared not ask about it, but sat troubled and uneasy in the corner of his carriage, trying to recal to his recollection what had occurred but a few moments before. That he had it crumpled up in his hand as he assisted his wife into the carriage he could recollect ; but his mind was so agitated and bewildered at the moment that he knew not what he did ; he could remember nothing more about it till he had missed it ; he feared that he had dropped it in getting into the carriage, and in that case it would be found and might be made public—might be sent after him—nay, he could not tell what might be the consequence ; but that which seemed even worse than this, was the chance of his never finding it, for thus he had not the slightest idea of what the address was, to which his reply should be sent. It was a most agonising thought. He hoped, however, that it might still be in the carriage among its various contents. At the first place they stopped he had everything taken out—but no letter was there !

They came to their journey's end ; took possession of their new house—a beautiful prince-like villa on the banks of the Arno ; his wife was happy ; the child was lovely, and throve like a flower in May ; she was the fondest of mothers. Could she but have seen her husband happy, she would have been the happiest of wives. As at Vienna so here, he spent most of his time on horseback ; he was as little as possible at home. Had his wife's mind been less occupied by the child than it was, she never would have rested without penetrating the secret of his sadness. But when she saw him at home, she saw him with assumed spirits, and she had no idea of his hours of

secret, untold agony of mind ; she saw that there was something wrong, and with all the power of her love she tried to set it right ; she carefully kept from him every painful subject, met him ever with smiles, and tried all in her power to make him happy.

He in the meantime had written to Vienna about the lost letter ; instituted all kind of search, and offered reward, but to no purpose. The letter did not appear, and the thought of the paralytic, speechless man, and the young girl thrown friendless on the heartless world of London, haunted him day and night. Oh, how bitterly was he punished. He was willing now to help them—nay, to make any sacrifice for them, and he had lost the power of doing so. He thought of old Mrs. Bellamy's words, " children, children, never let pass an opportunity of doing a kindness to those you ought to love, or the time may come when the thought of not having done so will pursue you as with a whip of scorpions ! "

CHAPTER VI.

MADEMOISELLE ANGELA.

THE newspapers announced one morning that, in consequence of the severe illness of the grandmother of Mademoiselle Angela, that favourite actress would not perform that evening as usual. The public, who lost a night's pleasure in consequence of the old lady's illness, sincerely wished her better—but the wish availed nothing ; the old lady died.

" Mademoiselle Angela desires to have some one

sent to her to alter her mourning, to-day," said Mr. Jones, of one of the great mourning warehouses in London, to his head man; "see that some one is sent to her immediately." The head man communicated the order to the principal work-woman, adding, "that she had better send one of the cleverest hands." The principal work-woman glanced into the large room, where there sat thirty young women at their gloomy trade, and without waiting to make any selection, called out that "Miss Jervis must take her working materials and go instantly to Mademoiselle Angela and make such alterations in her mourning as she required." It was an every-day occurrence, and the young lady to whom the commission was given having prepared all that was needful to take with her, which were contained in a little black box, found a cab waiting for her at the shop-door, and drove off to the handsome house of the renowned actress.

A man-servant conducted her up-stairs, and there a grave, middle-aged waiting-woman received her, who led her into Mademoiselle Angela's own bed-room. The chamber was the handsomest that the young work-woman had ever seen, and she was rather excited, for she knew how renowned was the lady to whom it belonged; her very heart beat at the thought of seeing her. The rich mourning lay on the bed, and while she took off her bonnet and cloak, Mademoiselle Angela entered.

"How beautiful she is, and how good she looks," thought poor Marianne.

The great lady smiled kindly at the young, modest dressmaker—she too was struck by her appearance; a sentiment of great kindness filled her heart—

she made up her mind instantly as to what she would do.

The young girl sat down to the work which was pointed out to her, and Mademoiselle Angela, ordering a book to be brought to her, and dismissing the woman, with the desire that no one should interrupt her that morning, seated herself on the sofa, and began to read. The room was so still that the quick movement of Marianne's needle and the turning of the pages of the book were audible. At length Mademoiselle Angela, closing the book, said, "Yours is a melancholy occupation ; all day long, the whole year through, working for sorrow, or what is worse, the mockery of sorrow."

The young girl sighed.

"It must be," continued the actress, "a weary trade to you."

"I am," said Marianne, "so thankful to be employed, that to me it is not so."

"Have you then known distress?" asked the other, but in so kind a tone that Marianne continued—

"I have a father dependent upon me—we have been very unfortunate," she said, hardly keeping back the tears ; "very unfortunate in many ways. I have feared starvation almost for us both, I have feared—Oh, I cannot tell what I have feared—London is an awful place for any one who is friendless—for a young girl especially."

The actress laid down her book, and taking a chair sat down by the table where the girl was working.

"I am a stranger to you," she said, very kindly ; "you know nothing of me ; can feel no reason why you should make a confidant of me—yet I wish you would do so."

The girl sighed again, and wiped away the tears which this kindness had called forth. "I have heard a great deal of you, Mademoiselle Angela," she said; "everybody talks of you, and I have heard that you are very good, but I have nothing to tell you that can interest you much, there are alas, so many unfortunate people in London."

"The unfortunate are always interesting to me," said the actress, with that air of simple, emphatic truth which was her distinguishing characteristic.

Marianne felt its influence, and replied, "There are circumstances connected with my family which are of a painful and altogether private nature—my father, who is old in experience and sorrow, rather than in years, and who is now helpless as a child in mind and body, has been wholly dependent upon me for the last twelve months. He was extremely fond of me; he expected that I should make my fortune by marriage; what little money we have had he has risked to make more for my sake—and all has been lost! We have now been in London a year and a half, and in that time I have tried endless means of obtaining our livelihood. I have been well educated, and as I know myself as well qualified for teaching as nine out of ten who do teach, I offered myself as daily governess, as teacher in a school, as instructor in various ways, but there always were for such situations twenty or more applicants besides myself, all of whom came supported by friends or interest of some kind or other. I had none. I tried to take pupils, but none came. I made fancy-work of all kinds, and taught it, but by this I lost money. I painted miniatures—children, dogs, cats, parrots, anything—and if dogs, cats, and parrots had alone been

my subjects and sitters, I might have done ; but a young lady, at least a poor one, cannot in London attempt this mode of gaining her living without being subjected to the most annoying insults. People," said she, blushing deeply, "thought me pretty, and in every way, in every situation, this was against me. Oh," said the poor girl, with tears in her eyes, "how often have I thought it would have been a blessing if I had the small-pox !"

"And have you no friends at all ?" asked Mademoiselle Angela.

"Friends !" repeated she, blushing deeply and sighing ; "friends ! yes, perhaps so. We ought to receive an annuity, which would make us independent, but he who should pay it is abroad. Oh, it is a sad thing," said she, bursting into tears.

The actress was deeply interested, "And why does he not pay it ?" she asked.

"I have written to him," replied she, "since my father's memory has failed him, and have told him all our distress ; but he takes no notice."

"But have you not other friends ?" she asked, "no connections, nobody that knows your family ?"

Again the girl blushed : "Yes," she said, "there are two ladies, very good and kind, who showed me great kindness, who knew my mother—but circumstances forbid my applying to them—yet I do believe that if they only knew what I have suffered they would befriend me."

"Do they live in London ?" asked the actress.

"No," she returned, "they live in the country, in Staffordshire."

"Could no one interfere for you—write to them for you ?"

Marianne looked up from her work for a moment, and fixed her eyes on the lovely face of the actress and said, "perhaps they might, but—"

"I am curious about you," interrupted Mademoiselle Angela; "I have been in Staffordshire—perhaps I know your friends—where do they live—tell me?" she said in a manner so unlike her usual calmness, that Marianne again looked in her face. "I once knew some parts of Staffordshire; tell me who are your friends, and where they live."

"They live at a small town called Utceter," said Marianne; "their name is Kendrick."

The actress rose instantly from her seat, and walked across the room—she seemed agitated—put her handkerchief to her face, and then sat down again.

"I told you," said she, hurriedly, "that I knew something of Staffordshire. "Utceter I know, but not your friends. No," said she, in her usual calm and simple manner, "your friends, the Kendricks, I never knew."

Marianne ventured a remark which made her heart tremble. "There was a Mr. Osborne there," she said, "and a young Mr. Williams, his nephew—but I daresay you never knew them."

"Ah!" said the actress, with an emotion which made her cheeks as pale as marble; "what of them—what of young Mr. Williams? Has he been a false lover of yours?"

"Oh, no, no?" said Marianne, looking at her in amazement; "but oh, Mademoiselle Angela, if you know anything of him—for he is a rich man now—for the love of God, do tell him that the old man—he knows who—is almost in want—would be in want

but for me—and I, what can I do? with all my utmost exertion I can earn but fifteen shillings a week. Oh, Mademoiselle Angela,” said she, dropping on her knees before her, “if you know him, do this for the sake of Christian love; oh, do it! for if you ask, who can resist you?”

“Rise!” said the actress, deeply affected; “rise, my good girl. With the man you name I can do nothing—but remember that I am your friend!”

With these words she went out, leaving poor Marianne to her tears and her astonishment.

Two days after this a letter came to Miss Kendrick, which excited the greatest astonishment and delight, and well might it do so. It was from that celebrated Mademoiselle Angela, whose fame had spread all over England, and it told, as the incomparable Angela only could tell it, the story of her acquaintance with Marianne Jervis. Miss Kendrick, the letter said, would know how they could best befriend her; for the present, however, this young girl was her inmate, and her father, who was feeble and infirm in the last degree, was about to be removed to one of those blessed institutions—the Sanatorium—where for invalids of the middle-class every comfort of home is combined with the most skilful medical treatment.

What did Miss Kendrick do when she read this letter? First of all she had a good fit of crying, and then she put on her bonnet and shawl and trotted off to her nephew, to whom she knew its contents would be like a message from Heaven.

The next day, though it was a market-day, Reynolds set off for London. “I shall be at home again

with all my faculties to attend to business for the future," said he. "I will not take a holiday again on market-day."

"Oh, go, go! and God bless you!" said good Mr. Isaacs, twinkling his eyes.

Reynolds had forgotten that he had never actually declared his love to Marianne; he fancied that she knew it as well as he did; and, perhaps, after all, she was not very much astonished when he rushed into the room and clasped her in his arms. What a joyful meeting it was! There was nevertheless a great deal which was both painful and sad to be talked over.

Reynolds, like all the rest of the world, was prepared to see an almost divine creature in Mademoiselle Angela, and she equalled his expectations.

"I do not know how it is," said Reynolds, "but she reminds me of a young actress that Williams knew in former days."

"I think it is she," said Marianne. Of their conjectures, however, they wisely said not a word.

Marianne was two months with Mademoiselle Angela, and then Reynolds, having put his h use in order to receive a wife, they were married. Mademoiselle Angela gave the breakfast, and even accompanied the bride to church. It made quite a stir in Utceter, that Mr. Reynolds had married a *protégée* of the celebrated actress.

"But," said Miss Kendricks zealously to all their friends, "she is no actress herself, and never had anything to do with players. There can only be one Mademoiselle Angela in the world."

Within three months after the marriage, the poor

father died. Reynolds, who had never communicated his own and his sister's marriage to Williams, wrote to him now with the news of his father's death; the letter, however, reached Florence exactly two days after the Williams's had left there for England—why we shall see.

The Williams's had now been twelve months in Florence. He continued as melancholy as ever; at times he spoke of returning to England alone, but of that his wife would not hear. She urged him to consult physicians, but he, who knew too well what was his malady, would take no physician's advice. His wife now began to suspect some concealed grief or other, some sorrow of which he spared her the knowledge from affection and tenderness. "Oh, how you mistake me, Edward," she said, "if you think I cannot share in your grief!" Her affection pained him deeply—he believed that there was a grief which she could not bear—the grief of his falsehood and deceit. He avoided his wife as much as possible, and spent his time alone. All his passion for Mademoiselle Angela was gone; his wife was in his eyes a superior being, and he coveted only her love, and could he have felt that he deserved her love, he would have been the happiest of men; but he had deceived her, and in deceiving her, had compelled himself to the cruellest neglect of his father and sister. These thoughts never left him.

One day his wife drove out with the nurse and child; they went out for the day, and according to Mrs. Williams's custom, took with them provisions for every possible want. One of the pockets of the carriage was stuffed with biscuits for the child; the

nurse fed him from them, and the child finding how good they were was never satisfied with them; when she thought that he had had enough, she took the cakes out and said, "Now he might have everything he could find there." Down went the little fat hand, but there was not much to find, and still the little fellow kept groping down, in the hope that there might yet be something; at last, up he brought a crumpled piece of paper—a closely crumpled letter, which seemed to have lain there a long time. His mother saw it—a letter in a female hand—it excited her curiosity; she took it and read it. She read it, looked hurriedly at the address, grew pale, and carefully folding it up put it in her reticule. She called to the coachman, and bade him turn back; she had altered her mind, and would go no farther that day.

The boy laughed and prattled on the homeward drive, but his mother neither heard nor saw him. A terrible secret had been revealed to her, and she could think of nothing but that.

On her return home she shut herself in her chamber; her husband was out on one of his hasty rides, and she re-read the letter. It was that letter which had been lost, that heart-breaking letter from Marianne to her brother. All was now clear to his wife. Her husband was then in reality the son of that unfortunate convict, Edwards—he did not bear his proper name—her child was descended from such a parentage. That might be galling to a proud spirit, but it was nothing to the cruel sense that she had been deceived, wilfully and deliberately deceived by her husband; and then that he had suffered these unfortunate relatives to suffer want—to die, perhaps

—perhaps had driven them to crime through his falsehood.

“Edward,” said she sternly to him, on his return, “why have you dealt treacherously by me?”

He turned deadly pale, and sank in a chair. She spread the letter before him.

“Why have you deceived me?” she asked. “Oh, Edward, that we should have lived thus long together and you not have the candour to tell me the truth!”

He raised his eyes from the paper to her face, but said not a word.

“You have done very unkindly by me,” said she, “and it is time now that we understood one another. This is no light thing, Edward, it is a grave sin before both God and man. To-morrow I leave you!”

He started up, and clasping both his hands together pressed them tightly on his forehead, “Leave me!” repeated he, in a voice of heart-rending agony.

“Yes, Edward,” she said, with stern calmness, “leave you, and seek out these unhappy relatives whom you have cast off!”

“Angel of God!” exclaimed he, falling at her feet; “oh, that you could only look into my heart—could have looked into it long ago—could have known only the anguish I have endured—the punishment which I have suffered.”

“But,” said she, “you have let your father and sister want—your own flesh and blood—and you, yourself, have lived in ease and plenty! God Almighty grant that the sorrow you have brought upon your own parent may not be visited upon you!”

She sank upon her knees beside her husband, and

bowing down her face, prayed earnestly, though without words.

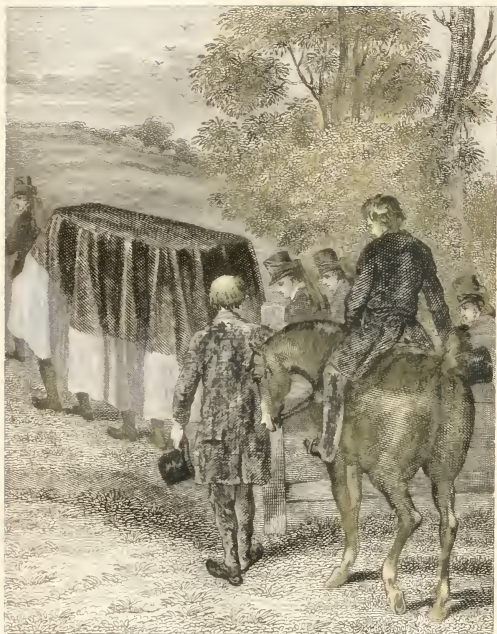
They both rose from their knees. His wife laid her hand in his, and looking in his face with an expression of the most undying love, said, in a low voice, "In joy and in sorrow, in good and in evil, I am ever thine! Let us go together, and retrieve the wrong that has been done—and so may the Almighty bless us!"

He bowed his face to her hand, and wetted it with tears.

THE END.

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MY UNCLE THE CLOCKMAKER.

CHAPTER I.

**TOM FLETCHER THE CARRIER IS OVERTAKEN BY A
PEDESTRIAN STRANGER.**

THE dusk of an April evening was falling sombrely over the earth, as a heavily-laden covered cart paused at the foot of a long ascent towards a village in Derbyshire. The cart was piled up with all sorts of tubs, boxes, and packages, such as are generally seen in the cart of a village carrier who goes weekly between his own hamlet and the next market town, taking thither the eggs, butter, &c. of his neighbours, and bringing them back sundry things from the shops in return, besides lots of things for the little shopkeepers of the village—tea-chests, sugar-tubs, soap-boxes, brushes, and the like. Ay, many a time had the lads of the villages through which that old cart passed weekly, got behind it to speculate on the precious contents of those packages. The little round casks that made their mouths water, for they knew that they were full of figs; those mats, that were stitched up so provokingly close, and, no doubt, were almost bursting with oranges, or nuts, or almonds, or raisins; and those long boxes with split hazel bands on the outside, and so slightly made, that when the bands were loosened, they seemed as if they would fall to pieces. What did those long, pointed, flag-like leaves, that stuck out between the box and the

4 TOM FLETCHER THE CARRIER IS OVERTAKEN

lid, tell of but Spanish juice? That old cart was a regular tantalizer every Saturday afternoon, as it went slowly homeward through half-a-dozen villages and paused, not for a very short time, occasionally before the village ale-houses, for the carrier to wash the dust out of his throat, as he said. Yet a most slovenly and dirty old vehicle it was, nevertheless—splashed and daubed up to the very awning of tarpauling with one layer of mud on another; for the roads there, in those days, were of a most terrific nature, and old Tom Fletcher the carrier thought it totally waste of time to wash his cart, though he had a week to do it in, being of the opinion of Dean Swift's servant, that it would soon want doing again. The very board on which his name was painted, as by law required, was so splashed over, that nobody was any the wiser for it; and the oil-horn, which contained the greasing for the wheels, and hung dangling at the side of one of the said wheels, was so encrusted with repeated layers of mud, that a very animated dispute might have been held as to the fact of its being a horn at all. That it was for the purpose of lubricating the cart axles, you could see by the quill end of a great stout turkey's feather sticking up out of it, and partly keeping open the lid.

The cart was drawn by a sturdy bay horse, whose shaggy heels were also loaded with the mud of the roads, and no small quantity of the same abundant article hung on his sides and in his long mane, which was of pale tawny hair, as if it had been faded by the sun. The horse, which was, moreover, what is called a bald-faced one, that is, had the greater part, and one eye, white, was as remarkable a looking beast as you could chance to see. He appeared to understand his business as well as his master; and when he came to the

foot of this ascent, he quietly stood still without his driver having to say "Wo." He had stopped on this spot, to an inch, every Saturday evening, at about the same time, for the last seven years; and, indeed, through the whole ten miles of road that he was accustomed to drag his load, summer and winter, he had his regular places to stop, or to draw on more actively, and his times for pausing, which he regulated with very little order or direction from his master. Indeed, so exact had the habits of the horse become, that when he stopped out of his regular routine, or stood still longer than his wont, Tom Fletcher the carrier would say, "What ails thee, Smiler?" and would instantly look to see if his gears were all right, or if he had got a pebble in his foot; and if he did not discover, which, however, was seldom the case, the cause of this deviation from Smiler's usual habits, would say, "Od rot thee, what ails thee? arta turning lazy, or arta getting oud like thy mester? Cup, man, that'll niver do; we canna afford to get either oud or lazy! Gee! com-mother-who!" and a crack of his whip put fresh life into the faithful old creature.

Tom Fletcher himself was as complete a character as his horse, nay, he was so much of a character, that he would not have set the value of a straw on his horse if it had not been a kind of oddity, and had had a will of its own. Tom was a sturdily-built man of nearly sixty years of age, forty of which he had plodded once a-week over this very ground to the town of Nottingham and back. His figure now stooped considerably forward, and except when he stopped to speak to any one, he went along beside his cart, with his face directed on the ground before him, as if he were in deep thought, although what his thoughts were about, it would have been difficult

to say. When he did lift up his head to speak to you, or to address his word of command or of encouragement to Smiler, you then saw a ruddy face, full of strong sense and dry humour. His large grey eyes had a quiet knowing look, from under the broad brim of his old hat, that had generally a penny-worth of whip-cord twisted under the band, in case he should lose that from his lash. He wore sturdy tall ankle boots, and old leather leggins, and over his coat a blue carter's frock, which frock, as he went along, was generally twisted up, and tucked in at the waist, so as to allow him to keep a hand in each capacious outside pocket of his coat, with his whip sticking up behind his arm. Out of these pockets his hands were seldom drawn, except to lift and crack his whip, to lift the beer-pot to his mouth at the roadside alchouse, or to pull forth and deliver a letter, for he was the postman along his whole line, or to drag out some package from his cart.

Tom was a man of much business, for, besides all the letters, newspapers, and packets that he had to receive, and with them a most bewildering host of directions how they were to be delivered in Nottingham, when he got there, from farmers and cottagers and their wives, and from young men and girls to their sweet-hearts, and how he was to bring answers back ; and then all the popping out of doors and garden gates as he came back, to receive these answers, and all the scoldings he got for not finding this or that person at home, and for not bringing answers which had never been sent ; besides all this, it was a manufacturing district, and he had a whole mountain of white bags of stockings to carry to Nottingham, and of cotton to bring from it, with a pocket-full of money for the work done. Tom

Fletcher was a man, we may be assured, eagerly looked for at home on a Saturday night. But spite of this, he never hurried himself. All his motions were as regular as clock-work. He started to a minute from home in the morning; at the very moment when the toll-bar men expected him to be up, and open their gates for him, for he commenced his journey at two or three o'clock in the morning, he was there; and it was a rare thing if he were not seen coming up the lane into his own village within half-an-hour of his regular time. Tom was a crabbed sort of fellow in his manner, and if any one began to question him, as to what had made him, on any occasion, a few minutes later than usual, it put him amazingly out of humour, and he would bluntly and tartly say, "You sitten a-whom here, and thinken that a hundred things can be done just as soon as one ' Now, do just set off to Nottingham, and run round to a' the hosiers' warehouses, and the grocers' and drapers' shops, and carry a' th' silly bits o' love-letters a' round the town, and come back to a quarter of an hour, and I'll gie ye the cart and horse and every thing into the bargain. Do pray ye, now try it—try it, and dunna bother me."

But 'Tom was not yet got home to have these questions put to him. He was standing at the bottom of the hill about two miles from home. Smiler had made his usual number of snorts and blowings, as if to clear his wind and wind-pipe, and take in a stock of breath for the long pull up the hill; and Tom Fletcher had just picked up a great pebble to scotch the wheel with when Smiler should stop again in the ascent to rest; and they were about to go on, when up came a stranger and asked Tom how far it was to the next village.

"As near as I can tell," said Tom, eyeing the inquirer, "and I have gone it some four thousand times, it's about two mile there and one back again."

"How can that be?" said the stranger; "I should think it must be just as far one way as the other."

"Well, try it then, try it—what's the use of axing me, if you known better than th' barn natives? Try it, and you'll soon know. Gee-up, Smiler, lad!"

And with that on went Smiler in good earnest, like a sensible beast, knowing that a tough job was before him. The old cart went on, lumbering up the dirty lane, and its wheels jarring in the deep ruts, and Tom, with his hands in his coat-pockets, went on by its side, looking on the ground, as if he had totally dismissed the stranger from his mind. The stranger, who was a middle-sized but broad-built man, of apparently Tom's own age, went on slowly after, seeming also to think no more of the churlish carrier, than the carrier did of him, but to peer about in the twilight, as if to take cognizance of what sort of a road he was in. He now turned round, and gazed, as well as the feeble remains of light would permit, down the road, then lifted his eyes to the high hedges which stood on equally high banks on each side of the lane; and then went on again looking, or endeavouring to look, into the banks, as if he would fain discover what plants grew there.

It was, indeed, a delicious hour and scene. The hedges, composed of tall, overhanging bushes of hawthorn, crab and hazel, were already partly green with their unfolding leaves; and the banks beneath them sent forth on the twilight air every now and then the most delicious odour of violets that grew thickly upon them. The showers of April had at once left a balmy softness in the air,

that it was a luxury to breathe, and had called forth the spirit of the violet and the primrose to revive in the heart the memory of many a departed spring. It seemed to do this in the bosom of the stranger, for he went on with slower pace, pausing sometimes and uttering to himself—"charning! charming!" But, awakening again as out of his reverie, he moved faster. The carrier's cart could no longer be seen through the gloom, but could still be heard rattling on its way, and every now and then stopping, while the voice of the carrier was loudly heard with its "Wo! wo! so then, Smiler!" as he clapped the great pebble under the wheel, to keep the cart from running back.

The stranger again came up to him, and, as if not at all regardful of the man's crabbed manner, said, "Well, how is it now, my friend, that you make it out to be twice as far to the village, as it is from it to the bottom of the hill?"

"Why, what should measure distance, but time and labour?" said Tom Fletcher; "It's all up hill there, and all down hill back again; and if it do not take you twice as long, and cost you twice as much pains to go one way as the other, why then, call me a sand-bag."

"Aha! no bad way of reckoning, after all, and rather new, too, which is something," said the stranger; "but are you the Leniscar carrier now-a-days? When I was in this country before, it was one Dick Anthony. The roads were worse then than now, which are still the worst I have seen these twenty years; and Dick went manfully through them for many a year. Is he still living?"

"Living?" exclaimed the carrier, "why, do you think folks live here for ever? I can tell you

that I have been the Leniscar carrier these forty years, and Dick Anthony has been just that time in his grave!"

"Oh, indeed! Poor Dick, how soon he must have gone off. Little did I think, when I laughed at his fright in these lanes, that he was so near his end. If you knew Dick, you knew that he was too fond of hot ale, with ginger in it, on his winter journeys, and used sometimes to be missing for whole days when he ought to have brought home the poor people's things and money. Many a time have they had to set out to seek him, and generally found him in a public-house at Kimberly drinking with the toppers of the village. On one occasion he said he had had such a fright that he dared not venture forward, that he had seen the foul fiend. When asked, however, to describe him, he could give no farther account of him, than that he was 'all spotted and spangled.' The laughter of the villagers was excessive, and it became a common by-word, that a thing was 'all spotted and spangled,' like Dick Anthony's devil. Poor Dick!"

"Mester," said Tom Fletcher, who now began to appear as curious, as he had before been crusty, "yo seem to ha' a famous memory. What yo sen is a by-word here yet."

"And who are living of the old people here yet?" continued the stranger. "Is parson Gould, or squire Hunter, or Ned Jackson the barber, or Betty Garner the pinder's widow, or old Thomas Hall, or who? What is become of the Hilliards; are they still here? and Hives the miller, and those handsome sons of his?"

"Beleddy, Mester, yo're a dab hand at axing questions, at ony rate! One has to look back a' nation long way into one's books to find what yo

axen after. Most o' th' oud folks yo talken on would be oud folks wi' a vengeance, if they were living now! Uh, fee, fi, fo, fum, why, they've been dead and gone a'most these half-hundred years. I question if th' sexton could find their graves even, he s had such generations to put to bed with his spade since their time! But I think it's my turn now to ax a question, and that is, and pray, who may yo be? Wer ye barn here? Wer ony o' th' oud ancients ye've been axing after yo're relations? or how war it? Here yo ha been of a sartinty; and I, that has spent a' my days here, should know summat about ye!"

"It's but little that you'll remember of me, my friend. I used to come here on business when I was a youth, often. I was not from here, and none of these people, nor indeed any people in this village of Highknoll, were related to me. But with the fondness for scenes where the light-hearted days of our youth were more or less spent—I have a great liking for much of this neighbourhood, and have always determined, if I lived, one day to visit it again. Ah! beautiful, beautiful days have I spent here! But you go on farther, do you not—to Leniscar? Thither I am desirous of going. I have a wish to stay there awhile this spring. If the reality equal the sweetness of my memory perhaps I may there end my days. Is the place as still, as retired, as old-fashioned as it was? Are its old-fashioned cottages, thatched and half-timbered, still standing in their orchards and under their great walnut trees; or has the busv, meddling, maiming rage for modern improvements, like the dry-rot, got in there, eating out all the solid substance of life, and leaving only its form?"

"By the mass, but yo done know how to ax

questions. Why yo must be a lawyer. But as to th' oud houses and th' oud trees, there they are, sure enough, just as yo left 'em. Yo *were* there, didn't yo say?"

"Thank God!" said the stranger; "then there is peace in one place on the earth. Thank God! I may hope then for some tranquil days!" He sighed and was silent.

Tom Fletcher grew every moment more full of curiosity. Who could this be, that must be pretty much of his own age, who remembered everything so minutely, and yet whom he could not for the life of him call to mind.

"And pray what then may yo're name be?" asked he.

"John Fox."

"John Fox—Fox—then of a sartin yo war na barn i' Leniscar. There's no Foxes there, nor hanna been i' my time."

"I fancy not," said the stranger laconically.

"And th' oud folks there? What o' th' oud folks there did yo know?"

"I did not ask after any old folks there, my friend."

"No, nor young uns nother, I reckon," added Tom again rather crustily.

"Nor young ones—but as you have asked me mine I will take the liberty to ask you your name. It is only right that we who are travelling on to the same place, and may become neighbours, should be better acquainted."

"My name, if that'll do yo any good, is Tom Fletcher."

"Tom Fletcher! surely not the Tom Fletcher that I knew. Tom Fletcher, the great, sturdy lad that went to herd the cattle on the common; that

had the battle with the great gipsy fellow who would drive off the miller's mare on pretence that it was one he himself had lost, and beat him by suddenly drawing a great wild-rose shoot with thorns as long and hooked as a hawk's beak across the gipsy's nose and brow, so that the smart and the gush of blood completely disabled him till Tom had time to give the alarm—that Tom Fletcher you surely cannot be !”

“Zounds, Mester, who are yo I say again?—who are yo? I *should* know yo, for yo known me. Tell me at once, for tell me yo shall and must.”

“You are then that same Tom Fletcher?” said the stranger stepping before the carrier. “You are? No, you cannot be. Time cannot have played such tricks with us. What I—what you, Tom Fletcher, this weather-beaten, stooping old man? Tom, the boy, the jolly boy, the hardy, the warm-hearted Tom, who was ready to be the champion of any one who was weak or abused. Tom, who ducked the tailor in Shaw's mill-dam because he ill-used his parish' prentices? Who broke open the pinfold many a night because the pinder did not give fodder to the imprisoned cattle? Who raised a ladder to the hall window, and enabled the maid who was wrongfully accused, as everybody knew, of stealing the squire's spoons, and had only been charged with it from the wicked man's private resentment, and enabled her to escape, and marched with her all night to her own place of abode and friends? No, *this* cannot be *that* Tom Fletcher !”

“It is no other, Mester, said Tom in great astonishment; “but how the dickens yo can remember me a' those years, and I canna, for the life of me, remember yo, that beats me a' to snapdragons.”

“Give me your hand, Tom,” said the stranger, giving it a hearty gripe. “Rough as is the outside which time and life’s storms have given you, there’s a warm heart beats in that bosom, or nature is a cheat. No, nothing could wholly change that. Never mind if you cannot remember me, there was nothing particular to remember. My memory has always been extraordinary, and besides, a Tom Fletcher one does not so soon forget. Well, here you are at Highknoll, you will have to stay some-time and deliver your articles—I shall post on. I know the way. I shall find the old sign of the Cat and Fiddle still hanging, I hope; and to-morrow at church we shall meet again. Good night.”

With this the stout stranger strode forward, leaving Tom Fletcher in such a state of wonderment as he had not experienced for years.

CHAPTER II.

JOHN FOX SETTLES HIMSELF AT LENISCAR.

WHEN Tom Fletcher was turning out of his cart the bags of cotton for the village stocking-makers, which he had then and there, on arriving at home, to deliver to the eager expectants, amongst the heavier articles which he was accustomed to leave till the Monday morning, he spied a stout, black portmanteau which he had never seen put in. It was so common a circumstance, however, for articles to be put into his cart while he was going his rounds in the town, and had left it at the inn in the care of a boy that he paid for the purpose, that this would not at all have attracted his attention in itself. But the kind of article was so very different to what he was accus-

omed to have committed to his care ; was so substantial, so good, so fashionable—even Tom thought, it was, in fact, the travelling portmanteau befitting a gentleman of any rank—that he wondered no little in desecring it. “What’s that?” said he to himself aloud. “What have I got here? That must be for the stranger gentleman, now, I warrant me;” and on stooping down to examine its address, sure enough it was for “Mr. John Fox, at the Cat and Fiddle, Leniscar.”

All Tom’s curiosity was roused ; he dragged out the large black portmanteau, but with especial care not to rub or injure it against the rough tubs and boxes amongst which it was lodged. The poor people who stood round the end of the cart like a swarm of bees around the entrance to the hive, each eager to seize hold of his bag and see what quantity of work the hosier had sent him for the week, although anxiously bent on their own little but vital interests, and clamorous to have their accounts looked into, and the cash paid by the all-important Tom, having still all their purchases for the Sunday’s dinner, &c., to make, yet no sooner saw this unusual object appear at the opening of the cart than they were all at once still. “What have you got there, Thomas?” asked a dozen voices of men and women at once.

“Why now, how am I likely to tell yo when I dunna know mysen?” said Tom.

“By Guy ! but that belongs to some great gentleman ; that’s such a trunk as never war seen i’ this village before. My eye ! but isn’t it a smart one ! And what a weight !” said they, lifting it from the ground, where Tom had set it to contemplate it. “And what straps round it, and what neat work, and what a handsome plate ! and, what’s that ? John Fox—ay, John Fox, engraved on it. And see on this

ticket hanging to the handle. ' Mr. John Fox, at the Cat and Fiddle !' Oh, the gentleman's at the Cat and Fiddle ! Thomas, who is it ? Who is it, Thomas ? "

" Howd yo'r silly tongues," cried Tom, " that's more than I know mysen ; the gentleman as yo seen is at th' Cat and Fiddle, and if yo wanten to know yo can go and axe there." With that Tom lifted the portmanteau from the ground, and bearing it away from the midst of the inquisitive throng whose heads were all meeting over it, deposited it carefully in a corner of his house, and refusing to answer one of the thousand questions still put to him, began busily opening his money bag, and from a roll of papers began to hand out to each person the money that belonged to him. This had the most decided effect ; all thoughts were instantly turned from the stranger to more closely-touching concerns, and Tom Fletcher speedily dismissed his crowd and turned to his supper, that stood ready prepared for him by his pretty niece. Here, however, the black portmanteau again fell directly under his eye, and he found a crowd of questions rising on his own mind as numerous and as busy as those of his neighbours had been. The eyes of the niece followed his, and no doubt she would have given a trifle to know something about the stranger gentleman too, but she was too well acquainted with her uncle's humour to utter a single remark. She only took care to help the hungry man to his steak, set the tankard of cool ale just before him, and had his pipe ready to hand to him when he had finished. Over this Tom pondered a good while, endeavouring to fish up out of the regions of his youthful memory some John Fox, but in vain. He nodded, snatched up his candle, and went to bed.

Wearied as he was, and accustomed to indulge him-

self in an extra hour or two of sleep on a Sunday morning, yet Tom Fletcher was up, had his breakfast, fed and cleaned out his horse, and turned out his three cows that his niece had milked, and at nine o'clock was seen carrying the black portmanteau down to the Cat and Fiddle. Here he expected to find the mysterious John Fox at his breakfast in the parlour, and hoped by further talk to come at something more tangible. To his disappointment, however, he learned that the gentleman had had his breakfast in his chamber, but ordered his portmanteau to be sent up to him, and then that nobody should disturb him till dinner time, having first inquired and found that the service at the church was not till the afternoon, the single service in the village alternating each week from morning to afternoon, the clergyman having to preach also at a neighbouring village. This was rather a trying fact to Tom, and as the landlord and landlady, and half a dozen of the villagers, who had already assembled there to learn something about this important personage, for rare indeed was the arrival of any guest at that out-of-the-world hamlet, were equally curious with Tom, they put the ale cup before him, and the sun streaming into the familiar old room of the Cat and Fiddle in a way to warm and call forth the closest thoughts from the most iron breast, the whole group were soon in full discourse about the stranger, and soon had learned all that Tom knew.

There is seldom an event in nature, or in life, that the clever men of this age cannot clear up. Does a meteor appear in the sky, or a strange kind of weather come, we have all the causes of these phenomena laid by our philosophers as clearly before us, as if they had been at the ordering of the thing

Does a king or a ministry take some singular step, it was all foreseen by certain people, though they had kept their thoughts to themselves, lest they should be thought rash ; but they can tell you what will be the consequences of the step. The consequences turn out to be quite different ; but, then, they can directly tell you *why* this is so, and must be so—they had only overlooked some one little particular. Relate to any of the clever men of our very enlightened day, anything which you have heard that astonishes you, and they will immediately show you that there is no cause of astonishment at all—it could not be otherwise. Find out the next day that you were wrong informed, and that the facts were so and so, and your clever man will explain that also, and show that it must equally be so. There is nothing now which our clever men cannot irrefragably prove, that a thing is black to-day—that it is white to-morrow, and green the next—you only omitted some influencing cause in your statement ; your premises might be wrong, but their reasoning is always right. How many political measures could we refer to that were pronounced as pregnant with national destruction if carried, which being carried, and no destruction ensuing, these very same croakers have been the first to prove that this must be so. Their reasonings were right, but some fact or facts had been carefully concealed from them. O ! it is a most comfortable age, where statements may be wrong, but every body is right ; and the clever people always can account for every thing !

Unfortunately for Leniscar, the philosophy of the age had not yet made its entrance there ; and accordingly our group at the Cat and Fiddle, having heard Tom Fletcher's story of what had passed with the

stranger, were in a most pitiable condition. Every body asked, "Who could this Mr. Fox be?" Nobody could answer it. "It must be a thin, whipper-snapper youth that used to come and take in stockings for the hosiers at Nottingham!" said one.

"Slim, whipper-snapper youth!" cried Tom; "art thou a slim youth? I tell thee, he's as burly as the tower at Coldnor Castle!"

"It must be a young lawyer's clerk that used to come about the rents of Lord Ormond." Then it was an auctioneer's clerk—then a grocer's apprentice that took orders—then it was a relation of this or the other family! "Fox! Fox? who here was ever married to a Fox? Foxes in the parish there were none, and never had been in the memory of man."

It was all in vain, not a thread of probability, much less a whole clue, could be got hold of; and yet the gentleman had an old attachment to the place; he thought of ending his days there! Before church-time in the afternoon there was not a house in which this great topic and mystery had not been warmly discussed; and to such a height had the fever of curiosity risen, that, on the clergyman's entering the church, he was perfectly astonished—he had never seen such an attendance before! Whilst he was in the midst of his wonder, in walked the stranger, and the universal stir which his entrance occasioned, and the turning of all heads, and the following of all eyes, as he composedly walked up the centre aisle, convinced the clergyman that this unknown person had something to do with this unusual flocking to church.

In any tolerably populous place, Mr. John Fox would not have presented any appearance sufficiently marked to attract unusual attention. He was a stout and grave-looking man, apparently of some-

thing more than sixty. His strong broad figure was arrayed in an olive-green ample frock-coat, well buttoned up, a pair of ample grey trousers, and buckles as ample on his stout well-made shoes. His head and face were of the same full and solid character as his person. His hair was strong and gray, and, as were also his whiskers, which were white, was cut short. His countenance was of a deep ruddy hue, with large gray eyes and bushy eyebrows. His nose was of the strong, round, Oliver Cromwell stamp, and there was a massy solidity about the lower parts of the face, and a firmness about the mouth, that proclaimed a grave, clear-headed, determined character. In his left hand he carried a broadish brimmed hat, and in his right a stick of a very remarkable character, which, as it did not fail to astonish on this brief view, before its possessor was hidden, all but his head, in the pew to which he directed his steps, and afterwards was a subject of much wonder and speculation, I may as well more particularly describe.

It was, in the first place, like its master, of a very solid and substantial character, and as he set it down with a certain decided energy as he marched up the aisle, it sounded on the stone pavement, and clinked on the brass of a monumental inscription, over which he passed, with such a noticeable vigour, as attracted all eyes to it. All eyes then saw that it was of a dark yellowish hue, or, in reality, a genuine fox-colour; and as he afterwards held the head of it up to his nose, that it had actually a fox's head, most admirably and naturally carved. Besides this, it was discernible that the whole stick was marked all over with figures, which later and closer inspection proved to be on one side a most elaborate design of

Solomon's Temple, and the signs of the zodiac, stretching from the fox's head to the iron-shod end ; on the other was an equally elaborate procession of the beasts to the ark of Noah, which, first of ships, was carved out as an exact counterpart of the Temple. All this tracery, which was in fact most beautifully and artistically executed, and was indeed the labour of Mr. John Fox himself, in many a leisure hour, did not fail to excite the deepest admiration and wonder in the minds of those simple villagers. The mysterious figures were soon set down to be astrological, and to enable the possessor on the spot, and at any hour, to find out and to foretell anything. Solomon, all the world over, is believed to have known everything ; in the East, he has always been held to be the prince of magicians—in the West, to be master of all knowledge under the sun ; and then the beasts of old Noah, it was clear enough that this grave stranger knew more than an almanack, if, indeed, he were not the almanack-maker. Every body surveyed him with deep awe.

This feeling of his strange and superior knowledge was not a little increased by the very fact of his walking leisurely into the very pew that he did. It was evident that he knew the way to the pew before he came into the church. He never looked to right or left, but walked sedately on to it, as if it had been his own ; and *that pew* was in fact that of a family lately extinct in the place, and having just now no proper occupants. It was evident that the stranger knew it. Nay, he put his hand to the button inside which held the door fast, just as if he had always known the pew, seated himself so as to have at once the best view of the congregation and the clergyman, and all that in a moment, and with-

out having to make a single change. He drew a very handsome but well-worn prayer-book from his pocket, and became deeply attentive to the service.

There was no family of great worldly account in this little hamlet; merely farmers, cottagers and labourers. When the service was over Mr. Fox advanced to the clergyman and conversed a few minutes with him, then quitted the church, making a respectful bow to the people who were standing about the door, and giving Tom Fletcher a familiar shake of the hand, walked away with him and Michael Shaw the miller, or as he was usually called in the dialectical familiarity of the place, Mick Shay. Having, however, told Tom that he should call on him in the morning to have a little conversation with him, he bade Mick and him good bye at the church-yard gate, and took a solitary foot-path down the side of a wood into the valley below the village.

That afternoon and evening various were the farmers, looking over their lands, and loving couples pursuing retired walks, or seated on old stiles, who encountered the stranger. He was now seen standing at the head of Mick Shay's mill-dam, which was a sheet of water really large enough to have been honoured with the name of lake, covering perhaps not less than fifty acres, and lying between upland slopes, varied with green enclosures, and woods charming enough, in a more known part of the country, to have made the whole scene admired for its beauty. There he was looking down where its waters shoot over the sluice and down on a flight of rude steps into the valley below, forming in truth a very fair cascade. Others saw him following solitarily the curves of the brook which this water formed down this valley, and which winded about, now

beneath tall trees, and now through the greenest meadows, in true sylvan loveliness. Others again saw him standing on the steps of Mick Shay's wind-mill, on the hill near, for this worthy miller had two strings to the bow of his trade, and ground with both wind and water; and from the airy height of the said wind-mill steps, overlooking the wide vale below, which for miles spread itself out in most peaceful and rich beauty. By others again he was met in a distant and deep wood. Of several persons, when they came up to him, or he to them, he had asked who still lived in this farm-house and that cottage, and had merely remarked, "O, indeed! such a family, I believe, once lived there." In every case he was right. The man must certainly once have known this neighbourhood well—who *could* he be? This, however, was a question which was not likely to be soon answered. In consequence of his interview the next morning with Tom Fletcher, he was conducted by him to an old cottage near his own, inhabited by its proprietors, Gabriel and Becky Thorpe. These were two old but hale people without children, who living on their own little patrimony, had passed through life as through a quiet dream—their cow, their orchard, and garden, and their little bit of land below, reaching in fact to the margin of Leniscar dam—Mick Shay's mill-dam, having found them at once just enough labour and support. Here John Fox was installed to his heart's content in the parlour and one chamber of this old cottage, which lay in the midst of its old garden, and surrounded by a perfect sea of great old fruit-trees. In this cottage and its garden, orchard and croft, John Fox seemed perfectly to luxuriate in a quiet delight. They were still, secluded, and old-fashioned enough, in all con-

science. The parlour was lofty enough not to require him to stoop, and that was all. It had two casement windows looking out into two parts of that sunny garden. In those windows stood pots of balm of Gilead, balsams, and myrtles. There was a squab or wooden sofa in the room set against the wall near the fire-place, which having on it a well-stuffed cushion and pillow seemed to invite to many a pleasant after-dinner doze. There was a dark old walnut sloping desk by one wall, with a bookcase upon it, in which Becky Thorpe had stowed out of the way not only her great green baize-covered Bible and her few other good books, but also her best tea-things, and her best tea and sugar. These were conveyed speedily to some other place of deposit, and John Fox was put into possession of all the mysterious little drawers and slides, and secret places of this desk. A huge chest full of books and other matters arrived by Tom Fletcher's cart on the following Saturday, and the bookcase was soon filled with books, such a set of handsomely bound books as never were seen in that cottage before, and all the interior of that desk with parchments and papers that seemed of a most momentous and of man-of-property-like character. Becky Thorpe soon remarked that never for a moment did Mr. Fox leave the key either in the door of the desk or book-case when he was out, never once did he even lay one of his books about. A most particular man he is, said she, exact to a hair about everything, and very solemn, and sometimes of an awful frame of mind, though still very pleasant, and what pleased her and her Gabriel especially, very religious.

"One can see plainly," Becky Thorpe would say to her neighbours, "that he has had his trials and his experiences in this life, though he is not a man

that lets you see far into his affairs, nor into his thoughts, excepting when he pleases. He reads a chapter in the Bible every morning after breakfast, and reads prayers every night before he goes to bed, and he has Gabriel and me to go in and hear him, which is a comfort to us. And my ! how he can read. It's really more solemn and affecting than our parson's reading i' th' pulpit. And he will often come and sit with us of an evening, and talk with us about our past life and experience, and it's quite a privilege to hear how he does talk. Oh, he is very book-larned, and has such a sweet spirit o' religion as warms my old heart but to listen to his words."

But before we go farther into Becky's account of John Fox, we will give some farther account of his dwelling. He had soon not only his books and papers, but Tom Fletcher had to convey from Nottingham carpets and hearthrugs which he had purchased for both parlour and bed-room, and not only that but a nice carpet also for those old stairs up to his room. Some hundreds of years had that old house stood, but such a thing as a bit of carpet in it there had never been before. "Oh, he has been used, one can see," said Becky, "to grand houses and grand ways. I and my oud man we are a'most afeard of going up and down stairs, and I've bought Gabriel a pair of listing slippers to slip over his shoes when he goes up stairs."

And really those little low rooms, with their neat carpets and clean casements, with their snowy-white curtains and their flower pots within, and the honey-suckles, and rosemary, and blossoming apricot boughs all about them without, were very charming. And that rustic bed with its curtains of blue and white large check, its variegated patch-work quilt, and its fair

sheets, was attractive enough looking to make the old gentleman betake himself to bed at the early hour of nine, as he often did. Nor was the garden less alluring. This was a longish square enclosure, surrounded by tall hedges of lilacs, many of them of the old white lilac kind that shoot up almost into trees, and they were here and there intermingled with syringas, promising in the course of a few weeks to burst out into whole oceans of beauty and fragrance. At the bottom was a rustic arbour where John Fox used to take his pipe and his book, and enjoy the hum of the bees which were busily flying in and out of a row of hives near. Below the garden, the old orchard extended its shade of ancient trees, and beyond that the green croft with tall hedges of hawthorn on each side extended down to the mill-dam.

As the time went on, and the lilacs and apple trees put out their young leaves and their delicious blossoms, the old gentleman seemed never wearied of traversing to and fro in these rural enclosures. There was not an old-fashioned flower or plant that he did not seem to contemplate with delight as an old acquaintance. The very stone-crop on the wall, the great spurge, the blue monk's hood, the commonest polyanthus, all filled him with pleasure. He was soon acquainted with some famous old florists in neighbouring villages, and had purchased from them such a stock of auriculas, polyanthus, ranunculuses, tulips, &c., as occupied almost a fourth of Gabriel Thorpe's garden, which was given up for the purpose. These were conveyed here in their pots, or were taken up out of their beds with all their soil about them, so that they were never affected by the removal; and early in the morning and late at night was Mr. Fox busy at work with his mats and his

sticks and his watering-pot, shading his precious charge from east winds, tying them up, and watering them with a gusto that was itself intense happiness. The village joiners were soon carrying in frames, the glazier following with the glazed covers and with hand-glasses, &c., and soon were seen, dropping in of a fine evening, one or more of the old florists to see their brother amateur and the flowers they had sold him.

It would have done anybody good to have seen these remarkable old village patriarchs, in their quiet way, walking about the flower-beds, and making their comments on the different plants. They were men who never, perhaps, had been twenty miles in their whole lives from their own homes, yet who had sent out flowers which yet maintained all over the kingdom the name and the fame which they gave them. In this tranquil and beautiful pursuit they had spent long and happy lives, and the very sunny stillness and repose of gardens seemed to be in their spirits. John Fox displayed a more active enthusiasm, in accordance with his energetic character, and was never weary of lifting his glasses, taking down his mats, and pointing out the advancing promises of plants, which in the coming months were to put forth all their glories.

The lake did not seem less affluent of pleasures for him. Mick Shay had offered him his boat for use whenever he wanted it, and it was a trait of delicate kindness that would have done honour to a man of far higher education and experience than Mick, that the very next day after making the offer, John Fox, on strolling down to the bottom of the meadow, found the boat swinging at the steps of a little landing-place, and fastened to a tree. Here it continued

daily to remain during the whole summer, excepting when Mick wanted it occasionally a few hours for himself. John Fox appeared to be a zealous fisherman, both with rod and net; he traversed in the boat every creek and winding of this fine piece of water, sometimes alone, lying for hours under the shade of some great overhanging tree, and reading, whilst he cast an occasional glance at his tackle; sometimes with Mick, who had a particular faculty of dropping his cast-net over the great basking pikes of the pond, or of lifting them out with a noose: sometimes also Gabriel Thorpe accompanied the old gentleman to act as rower, but he told Becky that for a keen fisherman, as Mr. Fox was, it was very odd sometimes to see how he would forget what he was about, and would let a great fish lug and drag at his line till it almost pulled his rod out of his hand, whilst he seemed sunk in a brown study. "Nay," said he, "I have fairly seen the fish so eager to bite that they have jumped up two or three at a time at his fly till they have actually knocked their noses together, and yet he has never seen them." Then again, according to Gabriel, he would start up and begin fishing in desperate earnest, and would have him push on the boat now hither and thither, now under this bank, and now under the other, till as quickly getting tired he would put the rod into Gabriel's hand and begin to read.

In one of these fishings, however, Gabriel made a mistake that caused Mr. Fox to omit taking him for a long time afterwards. John Fox was sunk into one of his thoughtful moods one fine sunny afternoon, when he suddenly heard Gabriel, who was in the boat, say, "Nicholas Flamstead? Why that's the Clock-maker!"

John Fox started from his reverie, darted a keen

and astonished glance at Gabriel, and saw him looking at the fly-leaf of the volume, which he had laid down in the boat, and gazing on the name written there, which had occasioned this sudden query and exclamation. A deeper colour, a solemn and a severe expression passed over the features of John Fox, as he took hold of Gabriel's shoulder, and said, "Gabriel, what are you doing? That was the name and that was the book of a once dear friend of mine. You know not what a shock you have sent through me by the sudden utterance of his name. Promise me solemnly that as long as I remain in your house, you never pronounce it again, or look into book or paper of mine."

Gabriel closed the volume in haste, for he was of a very placid, shrinking nature—begged a thousand pardons, and was glad when he could escape out of the boat—where Mr. Fox continued for some time to fish with a grave earnestness, but without uttering another sound. Deep were the cogitations of Gabriel and Becky, however, when he reached home, on this incident, for they knew something of the Clockmaker's history, and were extremely anxious to know more. But they did not dare to put any single query to their inmate on the subject. He himself, however, one evening introduced the topic, said, of course they knew much of his early friend's history; what happy days they had spent together at the native village of the Clockmaker, not far off.

Then did Becky venture to say, "Oh, dear sir, can you tell us what is become of him? What would not some in this country give to know!"

"I know it, I know it, Mrs Thorpe," returned John Fox, while a very sad expression settled on his features; "many and earnest, as you are aware, have been the inquiries made after him, but no one,

I believe, has yet been able to trace him farther than the Cape of Good Hope."

The farther particulars which followed in conversation, we shall soon have to detail in the course of our narrative ; we will, therefore, take another necessary previous view of our friend John Fox, in the company of his two frequent associates, Tom Fletcher and Mick Shay.

CHAPTER III.

DOUBLE LIGHTS ARE THROWN ACROSS JOHN FOX.

Two months had now rolled on since the arrival of John Fox in Leniscar. He had fished, and had seen his flowers come out with great delight. He was found to be a great walker, and would set off and stroll far and wide through the neighbouring country and hamlets, returning only to his supper. The mystery which hung around him was not one whit dispersed. The ideas of his wealth and importance were much heightened. He had letters directed to him from London, with great seals, and addressed "John Fox, Esquire." It was known that he had been a friend of the Clock-maker's, whose mysterious history had excited a deep interest in this part of the country, but no one could draw from him a single syllable more than what he had voluntarily uttered to Gabriel and Becky Thorpe. He had a serious and dignified manner, that inspired the deepest respect in the minds of the villagers, and the more so, as since his arrival, there was no case of distress or of illness which Mick Shay or the village doctor was not commissioned to relieve, from a source that they never mentioned, but which no one hesitated to

set down as Mr. Fox. As he passed the very children by the road-side or on the green, he filled them with a nameless awe by the serious look with which he regarded them, and yet, out of his capacious coat-pockets they would very often find nuts, gingerbread, and some half-pence suddenly flung amongst the marbles that they were playing with, which occasioned a busy scramble, to which, however, the strange man never gave the slightest attention, but was gone on, striding solemnly away with his fox-stick in his hand. Nay, on one occasion he had sorely frightened a little girl, who, with a heavy basket, in her hurry to get over a stile to which he was approaching, had left a piece of mud from her shoe on the top rail. "Now, my little maiden," said John Fox, gravely pointing with his awful hieroglyphic stick to the mud, "can you tell me how I am to get over here without dirtying my trousers?"

The little girl, in her fright at being thus addressed by so great a gentleman, clapped down her basket in precipitation, and was about to wipe away the mud with the little shawl which she had on her shoulders. "Nay," said John Fox, laying hold on her, "for that your mother would scold you. We can do better than that." So saying, he took his own pocket-handkerchief, wiped off the mud, and rolling up the handkerchief said, "There, I think you will mind better in future." The little girl, half out of her wits, and with tears in her eyes, dropped a low curtsy, and said "Yes, sir."—"I believe you, my pretty little maid—so give that handkerchief to your mother; she can have it for the washing."

The little damsel hurried home with her load to relate her adventure, and when the mother unfolded the handkerchief, out dropped a guinea! The

mother hurried as fast as the child had hurried home, to Mr. Fox with the money. "Well," said the old gentleman, "it is an old saying, 'Where there is mud there is money'—and so it is, you see; probably it stuck in the mud—it is none of mine; if you do not like it, give it to the child."

The place where John Fox was generally to be found in an evening was Tom Fletcher's. It was but a few steps from his own abode, and there was sure to be found also Mick Shay. These were the two people whose conversation he seemed still most to affect. After his almost daily rambles, he had a thousand questions to ask them of the places and people where he had been, and this led to conversations in which the history of the whole country was included. The homely humour and shrewd good sense that marked the communications of these two villagers, seemed to have a peculiar relish for him; and, in truth, they were of that sterling, though rough old English stamp, that cannot fail to please those who are charmed to find true sagacity and sound principles in the lowliest forms and most obscure situations. Tom, as we have seen, had a crabbed way with him, but he was sound at heart as oak itself. Mick was a very different person. He was not more than five-and-thirty years of age, was tall and somewhat spare in person, though remarkably strong and active. He always wore a light gray coat with pearl buttons, and a white hat, because his trade did not suit dark colours. His face was somewhat long and thin, and had a mixed expression of kindness and quiet humour. He was naturally of a sociable, but not merry temperament. In his youth he had been reckoned somewhat wild, and fond of resorting to wakes and fairs; but that was not

because he was of a dissipated turn, but because he was fond of all kind of active sports, and exhibitions of the like kind, as racing, wrestling, running, and so on. In these matters he had been too eager a better, as well as actor, and that to his own cost. In a wrestling match he had somewhat injured one of his knees, and went with a slight stiffness in it; and there were those who said that he had lamed his business by those feats to a still more serious degree. Be that as it may, Mick was universally allowed to be one of the shrewdest and wittiest fellows in the whole neighbourhood; yet he was reckoned anything but a prosperous man. He now stayed more and more at home, and seemed to have turned all his wrestling and running habits into his tongue. He was a great arguer, a great talker, and that in a quiet, but original style, that was most picturesque and amusing, and that generally soon brought the less clever wits of the neighbourhood into a regular entanglement. John Fox delighted above all things to draw him out, and hear him talk. He said that it was to him like looking on a green meadow in May, all full of cow-slips and daisies, and orchis blossoms, to hear Mick talk, there were such flowery colours mixed up with such a racy and yet exuberant humour in his speech. He had a peculiar way in showing the follies of men, by driving them to an extravagance. Thus Mr. Fox was saying one evening that he had been in various countries, and found one of the greatest comforts everywhere, as well as the greatest conduces to health, was the avoidance of soft beds and too softly-cushioned chairs. "There is laziness and disease in them," said he, "and in hot climates, the very plague; I always sleep, by preference, on a mattress."

"Why, Mester," said Mick, "I wonder you dunna lie at once on a board. If a mattress be so much healthier than a feather-bed, how much healthier and agreeabler must a good deal board be than a mattress. There now, you're sitting in a chair with a rush bottom—don't you think you'd be a deal healthier and comfortabler sitting on that three-legged stool? Nay, blame me if I don't think that you ought to have nother chair nor stool, but to set down a post and rail on the house floor to sit on. Or what think you of a roughish faggot pretty well stuffed with thorns? That would be very cool and healthy, and not at all conducive to luxurious laziness."

"These are extremes, Mick—silly extremes."

"Ay, Mester, and I'm fond of th' wise extremes—that is, something extremely comfortable. Oh dunna tell me about feather-beds being unhealthy! Of a winter night how softly and warmly they close up about you! Oh then you're as snug as an apple in a dumpling."

"That's the very thing, Mick," said John Fox, "that makes a bed so unhealthy; there is no circulation of air—you are closed up, as you say, like an apple in dough."

"Circulation of air! Oh hang it, who wants a circulation of air on a winter's night? Circulation o' warin'th, that's what I want. Odd's, Mester, if you want a circulation of air you may have it any day on the top of my mill; but, thank goodness, as for me, I'm not a windmill-sail, but a miller."

At this sally Tom Fletcher burst out into hearty laughter, and Mr. Fox was fain to join in it; he saw that he might just as well have convinced Mick that Mahommedanism was better than Christianity as that mattresses were better than feather-beds. .

"I'll tell you what, Mester," said Mick the next day as they were on the mill-dam fishing, "if you are so fond of hard lying and hard living you should have such a wife as our friend Tom's was. Thank heaven! — I hope it's no sin to say so—that she is in her grave now, for Tom had a hard life of it with her; and now he has a very neat and kind niece, that makes his house like a little palace of comforts."

"What, was Tom's wife miserly?"

"Miserly! She'd skin a flint for breakfast, and split a straw and roast it for dinner. It was all scrape, scrape, scrape with her. If you'd have flung a shilling into this dam before her face, she'd have jumped in, with the best will in the world, and drowned herself in the hope of picking up the shilling as a ghost, and carrying it into the other world with her. Do ye know, she kept a shop, and I used to serve her with flour; but it was always a regular battle to get any money for it. Once the account was seventy pounds; so I goes in and says, 'I've a big payment to-morrow, Martha—perhaps you'd let me have that bit of an oddment for flour.'"

"'Eh well-a-day, how thou dost talk,' said she; 'it's but an hour sin that greedy grocer was here from Nottingham; he's always a coming is that rat-faced fellow, and he's drained me as dry as a bone. In a bit I'll see what I can do for thee.'

"That had been her story for two months, so I got up to come away.

"'Sit thee down, Mick,' said Tom; 'and now, ould lady, up stairs with thee and down with the mony and pay him.'

"'Bless thee, lad! I tell thee I have not a farthing, if it war to save my life.'

"'But I say, pay him;—do'st hear?'

“ ‘Oh never mind—never mind,’ says I, ‘another day will do, though I was at my wit’s end for money, but I was afraid of making words between a man and his wife.’

“ ‘Sit thee down, Mick,’ said Tom more earnestly.

“ ‘No,’ said I, ‘I’m going; good night.’

“ Tom started up, and holding his fist over my head, said firmly, ‘Other sit thee down, Mick, or I’ll knock thee down. Thou *shall* have it, I tell thee, and so no more about it.’

“ The moment the old woman heard this up she jumped as nimble as a young lass, and up stairs she went, and before a man could say ‘Jack Robinson,’ she was down with the money, and said, ‘Well done, Mick, lad, I was only joking.’

“ Now would you believe it, Mester, that old body had stuffed the house, almost from top to bottom, with bank-notes? When she lay on her deathbed, the cat, frightened by a strange dog, flew up stairs and up her bed-curtains and on to the bed-tester, and down comes a lot of something all ringling and jingling all over the floor; and what was it but guineas and crowns and half-crowns, a whole pot full, that she had hidden and that the cat had upset

“ One day Tom was folding up a heap of stockings that he had bought from some poor maker, and was going to take to sell to some hosier in Nottingham, when he felt a something like a lump in one, puts in his hand and pulls out—what? why just twenty pounds’ worth of bank paper.

“ ‘Now that’s thy doing, Martha,’ said he to his wife as she lay in bed just by, ‘Isn’t that a silly sort of a place to hide money in? I might ha taken this to th’ hosiers, and where would it ha been then?’

“ ‘But thou didn’t take it,’ said she very quietly,

“and so th’ hosier did not get it. What would ta have, man?”

“Well, no sooner is th’ old woman’s corpse out of the house than Tom sends for me, and we begins a regular hunt. We turned up beds, ripped up beds and mattresses, pulled down curtains, pulled open all drawers, felt all about th’ inside o’ th’ desk, up th chimney, under the thatch, nay into the very pigsty and everywhere there was money, money, money, just like whisps o’ hay. ‘Good gracious!’ says I, ‘what eyes must Martha have had for hiding-holes; but, Tom, where war *thy* eyes?’ For years and years had this poor old cretur been hoarding, and hiding, and it’s ten to one if we have found above half her money, but what we did find bought and paid for a whole farm, I can tell ye.”

“Tom is rich, then?” said John Fox. “I am very glad to hear it. But with such property why does he go slaving to Nottingham every week?”

“Oh, Tom thinks the folks could not carry on without him. I’ve often asked him to give it up and make himself easy and comfortable in his old age. But he turned sharp on me, and said, ‘What, thou wants to be rid o’ me, dost ta. Didst ever know an old tree shifted that did not die?’ ‘I’ll retire,’ says an old tradesman; ay, and he generally retires into his grave! I tell thee, Mick, when a man has been active all his life, when he stops he stagnates. His blood becomes full of melancholy, and he’s gone. Stop a brook that has been running, and turn it into a pool, and what is it?—a puddle! When is it that it is clear, and singing, and good for anything? While it is running. Stop it, and you’ve done for it! I’ve been going all my life, Mick; and when I stop, I shall stop altogether!

No, no, nother Smiler nor me want to *retire* yet, as they call it—first *tire*, say I, and then *retire*. But we're neither of us yet so hard up as that comes to. No, I shall go on yet, if it were only to carry the young things their bits o' love-letters, and to bring th' mester's letters and newspapers. When I want to go to sleep under a sod, why, then, I shall cry 'wo!' for the last time, to old Smiler—and, depend upon it, it will be 'wo' to us!'”

The three acquaintances chatted on from evening to evening in Tom Fletcher's house, or under the trees in Gabriel's garden, with their pipes, and pots of Cat-and-Fiddle ale, calm and cheerful as the sun which often cast its setting beams upon them there, when a single incident threw a rocket, as it were, in amongst them, and made them leap up and fly a dozen ways—here, there, yonder! and that to some purpose. Let us see what this was, in another chapter.

CHAPTER IV.

A STARTLING SIGHT INTRODUCES A STRANGE STORY.

It was one evening about Midsummer that John Fox, after one of his long rambles, entered hastily into Tom Fletcher's, where Tom and Mick Shay were hoping for his arrival. He looked flushed, heated, and dusty. His usual armed-chair was standing ready for him, and Tom's pretty niece rose, made a curtsy, and drew the curtain to exclude a blaze of sunshine which fell directly on the chair. But Mr. Fox, instead of seating himself, took a hasty turn through the apartment, and then wiping his brow, which displayed profuse perspiration, said,

"How's this, my friends? Do you know what I have seen? Do you know what has taken place?"

"What's that?" said both, at once, rising from their chairs.

"Why, I have this afternoon strolled round by Dainsby, and as I reached the gates of the old Hall, what did I see? A sight that I could not have believed could have been in this world. A sight worse than if the ghost of my father had risen from the grave and bade me follow him quick into the earth! Can the villain dare even that? Are there no bounds to his rascality? Is there nothing but the utter annihilation of all that is ancient and venerable that will satisfy him? That petty demon of an attorney has at last put the finishing stroke to his presumption, and if he be not stopped all is over!"

As John Fox finished this sentence, he stood staring at Mick Shay without giving them a single ray of information on the subject of his excitement.

"But what is it, mester?" asked Mick. "What's amiss? Can we be of any use? Tell us, can we run for help anywhere?"

"Ay, run, fly, fetch help, both of you—let's see, where are my papers?"

"Here are pen and ink, sir," said Tom's pretty niece, reaching a little table and placing these articles on it.

"I forget," said John Fox, "my papers are at home—but it matters not, this will do." And with this he seemed to collect himself a moment, and, looking at the two astonished men, he said:

"Would you believe that Damsby Old Hall is going to be pulled down? Would you believe that that pestilent pettifogger Screw Pepper, has had the audacity to doom the old mansion of the Flamsteads to the hammer, and that, not as a whole, safe and

sound with the estate, but piecemeal, to be pulled down by scoundrelly bricklayers and carpenters ; and to be converted into a heap of dusty scantlings and brickbats, and dispersed to the four winds of heaven to build hovels and pigsties out of ! ”

“ Dainsby Old Hall to be pulled down ? ” cried both Tom and Mick, in a breath. “ Impossible ! They may as well talk of pulling down the church. ”

“ But I tell you they do not *talk* about it ; they are actually proceeding to do it. They have doomed it, have marked and condemned it. I have seen it with my own eyes, and we must be quick or the ruin will begin. ”

With this John Fox drew a large handbill from his pocket, and holding it up, they could see, in large letters, the words “ Dainsby Old Hall, ” and something, in letters nearly as gigantic, about “ Lots ” and “ Building Materials. ” Having displayed this a moment, the old gentleman, as if calmed by the act, seated himself in his chair, and gazing on Tom and Mick intently, who also reseated themselves on the old squab opposite, he thus proceeded, in a tone and language that presented a singular contrast to his preceding excited address :

“ I say, I strolled round to Dainsby, and I think I never saw it and the country about it looking more beautifully than in the summer richness of the present time. All was so green, leaves and pasturage, all so fresh, and tender, and luxuriant. The uplands all strewn with flowers of all hues ; the meadows so deep in grass already. The birds everywhere singing ; the people everywhere busy as in the joy of their hearts. All at once a peacock shouted from a great elm-tree by the parsonage, and that called my thoughts as by magic to the Old Hall. Ah ! thought I, how joyous and how beautiful it used to be there,

and how melancholy it must be now. How often have I heard in my young days the peacocks scream from its lofty trees, and now it stands empty and desolate. If I should go past, I suppose I should hear nothing but the sparrows wrangling about its roof, and hanging their long hay-tufts of nests from its eaves. I should see nothing but weeds and decaying wood-work and grown-up paths, where all used to be so cheerful and so happy. A sort of melancholy fascination drew me. I would go there; I would pass and see what a sad spectacle it was. But what was that I saw at a distance, not sparrows on the roof, but men. I was struck with a strange feeling. What! They *are* men? My eyes do not deceive me? Yes, there they are. At the very top. They have ladders and are ascending to the very cupola, to the very vane. There again, and others walking along the broad parapet! Nay, there are some actually in the balcony over the principal entrance. What does it mean?

“I hastened onward with a feverish eagerness, and yet with a cold sensation at my heart. They were workmen, joiners, bricklayers, and the like. I could now see them plainly. And below, there in the court, are more of them! What will they do? Is the old place sold? Will the purchaser repair it? But if so, why all these men at once here scrambling up like so many flies about it? And *such* men, for there seem to me to be as many masters as workmen. And here again, what is this? Before the gates stood, drawn up, gigs, carts, shandry-dans. What can it mean? Are they valuers, sent by men who wish to purchase?

“I drew nearer. Yes, there is a sale intended. I see the great hand-bills on the gate-posts and in the

upper windows. But what is that? I came still nearer, and a strange horror seized me! I beheld chalked on the front of the house—on its roof, on its very cupola—in mammoth-like letters, ‘Lot 14,’ ‘Lot 20,’ ‘Lot 25,’ &c. The truth flashed at once upon me; they will sell the fine old place for materials; they will pull it down; and here are the birds of prey gathered already around the carcase!

“With trembling knees I advanced to one of the great gate-posts, and read what confirmed all my fears,—what stands here!”

John Fox again held up the great hand-bill, and then flung it on the table before him.

When Tom and Mick had both satisfied their curiosity, and expressed their astonishment over the hand-bill. John Fox seemed to take up the thread of his thoughts.

“I never till to-day,” continued he, “felt what a strange sensation it is to see a solid, substantial thing that you love stand before you—stand as if it made part of the earth itself, and yet feel that in a few days it will have vanished from the spot as if it were a mere dream. Dainsby Old Hall! why, it is connected with my ideas of Dainsby as much as the very church, or the very ground on which it is built. One would just as soon expect the hills that rise all around to skip away, the brook that has always run down the valley, to disappear, and not even leave the channel it has run in. There stood the old hall, as I gazed on it, as solid, as ponderous, as stately, as venerable as ever, and yet I knew that if nothing extraordinary interposed in a fortnight, it would be all down and dispersed like a house of cards. Is it possible? said I to myself; can that old house of the Flamsteads be thus really conjured away like an

egg from under a hat? Why, it has stood there I reckon these three hundred years, just as it does now. There are all its walls, its windows, its gables, and its cornices—they are no shadows. There are all its rooms and passages—the very papers and the pictures on the walls—the very furniture which has been used by so many individuals of the family and their friends—and I can see as plainly, as if I were in it, every nook, and corner, and closet. There is the old French settee on which the late Mrs. Flammstead used to sit at her work-table—there is the billiard-table at which we have had many a merry game—there are the old gentleman's desk and his easy-chair, so worn out at the elbows. I see the very stag's horns on which he used to hang his spurs and his riding-whip. There are the old-fashioned screens, and the rich cabinets sent from China by their cousin the merchant; and, in short, all through the house, there is not a thing that has not a history and a value that would draw tears from the very dead, at the bare idea of their being carried away. Carried away! that is little; the very rooms shall be annihilated, turned into spaces of common air, into nothing! It seemed to me as if such a thing was impossible. They are real, human things! said I. They are—they must be—they cannot be otherwise! What! shall I walk past here a month hence and there shall be no Dainsby Old Hall? Let the earth vanish as soon!

“And then I began running over in my head, or rather in my heart, all the events which had stamped a value on this house, and which belonged to it, and it alone. I saw gay wedding-parties issue from it amid the peal of merry bells and the fluttering of white favours. I saw gay, handsome, laughing, and

tearful faces; they were like April mornings, all dew, and sunshine, and beauty. I saw gay, handsome parties again alight at the gate, and enter it, there was feasting—there was joy! I saw eager faces hurry through passages and across the court; and there were hasty but joyous feet; the church-bells again burst forth with their riot of gladness—there was an heir born! O! how many of these gladsome events have there been at this old house! What gay, active, happy forms and faces; what young families, bound heart and hand, have grown up here! And then there were death-beds, and slow-pacing hearses—old and honoured people, who left life-long histories here, were going away. Nay, there came such a train of such things across me, that I became desperate. I clenched my hand at the people coming out to their gigs, talking of their future bargains, of lots, and sectioned masses of these sacred walls, and laughing at what they called the lumber of wigged and gowned ancients that would go to the brokers to be palmed off as people of some account. These fellows, I have no doubt, thought me mad; for, snatching that hand-bill from one of them, I said, ‘Scoundrels! you have not yet clutched your prey!’ and broke away in a state of frenzy.

“And yet I was much to blame. The men were innocent men enough. They have nothing to do but to follow their trade and make their bargains; but there is one villain who must be stopped, let it cost what it may, Mick. Let us have the horse and taxed-cart here in half-an-hour; I must be off to Derby to-night. Tom, you must away to Ripley to the post, with a letter.”

At this Mick Shay disappeared with long strides; Tom put on his carter’s frock and hastened to supper

up his horse, and in the meantime Mr. Fox wrote his letter; and in half-an-hour Tom was posting off, stick in hand, and Mick and Mr. Fox drove off in the opposite direction at a spanking rate; for Mick disdained any but first-rate cattle, and his tall bay mare went at a speed that would see them at Derby within the hour. While they are thus gone there, on important business, let us go back a good many years and learn something more particular about Dainsby Old Hall.

CHAPTER V.

THE FLAMSTEADS AND THEIR FORTUNES.

THE Flamsteads had been residents at Dainsby for a vast period of time, probably from before the Norman Conquest; but they had not been the possessors of what was called the Old Hall for half that time. It was generally said to have been built in the reign of Edward VI. They had acquired possession of it only after the civil wars. Till then, they had been plodding farmers—a portion of the old yeomanry of England. The Dainsbys became then extinct, and the younger Flamstead of the time, having risen to a captaincy in the parliamentary army, was enabled, by favour at head-quarters, to make a cheap bargain for the Hall and its estate. This estate did not exceed five hundred acres, a good deal of it of strong wheat land. The Flamsteads removed into the Hall, and continued to cultivate the land themselves, maintaining a station something like that of a gentleman-farmer, before, however, such a compound term was known. They were, in fact, gentry, yet never associated, nor aimed to do so, with the chief gentry of the country. They seemed to prefer preserving

the plain and plodding character of the family, to seeking, by higher accomplishment and ambition, to raise themselves in the county-scale, and to connect themselves with its wealthier families by marriage, thus probably increasing the estate itself. Nay, the two great highways to advancement, for those who had a portion, and yet but a moderate portion of the soil of their country—the church and the law—they never entered upon. One would have thought that this would have been the most natural way of securing an establishment for the younger sons; but the plain truth was, that they never seemed to seek any sort of support for these. The eldest son always took the estate; the daughters always married off pretty well, for it was a handsome family; but the second son, and there was, strangely enough, rarely more than two sons, and often not more than one, was often a sort of head-farmer or manager for the elder brother; and if they did not agree, was often little better than a vagabond. Once, indeed, the second son in his old age actually worked on the roads, and the family did not seem to trouble itself about it at all. This poor, good-natured fellow, because he could not tolerate the overbearing airs and niggardly conduct of the elder brother, had disdained to remain under any obligations to him, but applied at once to the parish for relief, thinking this would pique his brother to different conduct; but, strange enough, the brother came forward and said he thought that it was a very good idea, and proposed that he should be made permanent repairer of the road, with a cottage and a fixed salary. “We have always been workers,” said the elder Flamstead, “work is no disgrace; and it makes very little difference whether our Guy (the brother) level the clods in the fields or those on the

roads." The post was given to this Guy Flamstead ; and those persons who are actors in our story, John Fox, Tom Fletcher, and even Mick Shay, could well remember Guy when an old man, still following this vocation. He was a very good-natured old fellow, fond of a sup of ale, and not at all hurting himself by labour. He might be seen slowly sauntering along the highway, somewhere about the village, with a shovel and a mud-rake over his arm ; but still oftener were these implements to be seen reared at the ale-house door, and old Guy to be found comfortably seated with some of his village cronies within. Yet one circumstance, well attested, will not allow us to believe that old Guy Flamstead was insensible to the injustice of the family custom that excluded the younger sons from a share of the family property ; for once when a notoriously wicked and covetous old fellow was on his death-bed, he went to visit him, and thus addressed him—" Well, so the doctor says you are not long for this world. You 'll be sure to see my father in the next world—birds of a feather will flock together, I warrant 'em, there. So be sure to tell him that my brother Simon treads very faithfully in his steps. He has turned me out on the roads, you can say ; and now he has himself got a second son to follow me !"

The second son, Guy's nephew, here alluded to, was the clockmaker, who, we have incidentally seen, was the mystery of the neighbourhood. This youth, as he advanced into his teens, displayed a considerably thoughtful, and at the same time steady, character. He saw his old uncle Guy on the roads and his father in the possession of wealth. He heard that this had always been the case in the family, and asked why it should be so ? At this question every-

body opened their eyes very wide. His father stared, his brother laughed, but as neither the stare nor the laugh at all cleared up his ideas about the injustice of this arrangement, he again asked the question more loudly than before. On this his father said, "Nick, dost thou * think thyself wiser than all the generations that have gone before thee? Dost thou ask why the eldest son takes the estate? 'Tis to keep the estate together, to be sure. Where would it have been now, think'st thou, if every younger Flamstead before our time had carried off a part of it? I tell thee, the auctioneer's hammer would have knocked it into a thousand shivers."

"Ay, that would it," said his brother, laughing again, "and neither thou nor I, Nicholas, would have gotten an atom of it, so thou sees it is a deal better as it is, for now *I* get a good thing, and thou gets just as much as thou would have had at any rate."

"But just tell me one thing, father," said Nicholas Flamstead, now arrived at the sagacious age of seventeen, "what reason is there in making one son a gentleman and the next one a beggar? Is there any such great virtue in coming a few days or years earlier into the world?"

"Well, I reckon there is," said the father; "it was always thought so, at least people always acted as if they thought so, and I don't pretend to be wiser than those who went before me. Besides, I expect I can do as I like with my own."

"Only be sure that it is your own first, father," replied Nicholas calmly.

The old man and the elder son opened their eyes wider than ever.

* In this rude and primitive part of the country this form of the pronoun was always familiarly used, and even is frequently so used to the present day.

"Yes," repeated Nicholas, "be sure of that, or it may bring a trouble after it. It seems to me that when God gives children, he makes it a duty, a holy, a religious duty to act justly towards them. They are all *his* children entrusted to your keeping for a while; and if he give you substance to support them on, and you give *all* to *one* and *none* to *all but one*, will he not one day ask you a question or two about your stewardship?"

The old man stared harder than ever.

"Nick," said he, "who taught thee all this fine talk? I never heard such in all my life before. I never heard th' parson talk in that way."

"Then make me a parson, father," rejoined Nicholas, "and I will talk that way from the pulpit, for it is high time."

"Parson!" exclaimed the brother. "Parson!" exclaimed the old man. "No! 'Od rabbit thee. There never yet was a parson Flamstead in Dainsby. No, I see what thou would be at; thou would be tithing thy elder brother's lands."

"Oho! that's it, Nick, is it?" said the brother; "so, if thou canst not have the estate thou will at least try to skim the cream off it. A pretty parson thou would make. One may see already what sort of a lecture one should get though. No, Nick, no—I would much rather see thee clerk than parson."

"Well, let me be a clerk, then," said Nicholas; "let me be a tradesman, or what you will—only one thing I can tell you, I do not mean to be a beggar and a hanger-on."

At these words so astonished was the old man, who sate at his favourite evening's employment of winding worsted from off a reel into balls for his wife to knit with, that up he started in such a hurry that he knocked down the reel.

“ ‘There,’ said Nicholas, very composedly, raising the reel again from the floor, “it has reeled a long time, but it has fallen at last.”

Neither father nor son saw the excellence of Nicholas’s pun, for they were too much amazed and confounded at his daring doctrines, and especially at his idea of being a tradesman. No Flamstead had been a tradesman for generations ; they might be farmers, might be outcasts, might work on the roads ; but a tradesman ! that was a strange idea. They could not have believed that a Flamstead could have been so mean-spirited.

But Nicholas was still more mean-spirited ; for without any further ceremony he marched off to the little town of Alfreton, and apprenticed himself to a clockmaker ! If the clock had walked out of the church-steeple, and gone chiming all round the village ; or if they had awoke some morning and found the said steeple standing on the point of its spire, it would not have more startled the inmates of Dainsby Old Hall. It was such a degradation as had never before befallen the Flamsteads in any age. Old Guy had been, it is true, a common labourer on the roads ; but what of that ? That was really a gentlemanly calling. It was only mending the roads that belonged to the Flamsteads, as the Flamsteads mended their acres ; and besides, it was all in the parish. In Dainsby parish what did it signify ?—there stood the Old Hall to say to anybody that the Flamsteads were gentle-folks. But in a strange town, and in a little shop with clocks and watches in the window ! Well, Nick was crack-brained, and that was the long and short of it.

“ No, he’ll disgrace me—he’ll disgrace me,” said the brother ; “ that’s what he means, because he can have neither half the estate nor the tithe of it, and

tell me of all my sins publicly into the bargain. But there's a remedy even for that—he shall no longer be a brother of mine ! I disown him—he belongs no more to the family, and so—we are not disgraced at all.”

“ No, that's right, Sykes,” said the father, “ that's right—that's a famous idea. I never thought of that. He doesn't belong to the family, and so it is no disgrace at all.”

With this “ famous idea ” both father and son appeared perfectly satisfied. Sykes laughed at his happy conceit at least a dozen times before the day was ended. The mother, who could neither oppose them nor help her son Nicholas, was silent ; but she thought, as she heard her husband and elder son often call Nicholas a mean-spirited fool, that perhaps he was no fool either. He had always had a turn for mechanics, and he would thus at least have a livelihood in his hands. She took care to send him his box of clothes, and kept up a private correspondence with him, and loaded the carrier's cart every week with good things for him, plum-cakes and fruit out of the green-house, garden, and orchard.

Nicholas did not venture for some time to visit his native home, for he could not expect a very pleasant reception from father and brother, and if it were painful to him he knew that it would be tenfold so to his mother. His father, indeed, wrote to his master, threatening to indict him for inveigling away his son ; but Nicholas put an end to this by declaring that if they prevented his being a watchmaker he would turn Methodist preacher, at that time a new, and to people generally, a most odious character. This had its full effect. After a while his mother intimated to him that she thought he might walk over to spend the Sunday with them. He did so,

but it was a trying time. The father and brother, who pretended not to see him at all, were continually asking what o'clock it was, and whether anybody knew of a fellow from whom they could order a good clock for the drawing-room. When Nicholas handed to his brother a spoon at dinner, he smelt at the handle, and asking his father if he did not think it smelt of Florence oil, sent it away. The poor mother, who was now roused to indignation, said, "Oil! if it do so it is the oil of fatness, which is spoken of as a blessing in the Bible, and that often in our days makes a lord mayor."

"A lord mayor! Why, did they make lord mayors out of clock-makers?"

"Yes," said the mother, "and out of worse things! Was not Dick Whittington, a mere hawker of cats, made three times lord mayor of London? And were not all the lord mayors men who had gone up to London from the country and had made fortunes in trade, and not only rode in a golden coach as grand as the king, but were often members of parliament, and received in great honour at court? Hold up thy head, my Nicholas," said she proudly, "and one day, I warrant, I shall see thee lord mayor of London."

If Mrs. Flamstead had prayed for the wisdom of Solomon, it could not have framed for her a speech so exactly adapted to the capacity of her husband and son Sykes. Lord mayor!—it was a new idea. He then, thought the old man, would be greater than the Squire of Dainsby, and so thought the elder son. From that day they neither talked of ordering clocks, nor perceived any smell of Florence oil. Nicholas came and went during the remainder of his apprenticeship, and was received with as much apparent friendliness by his father and brother as before—by his

mother with increasing affection. The first gold watch which he could put together to his own satisfaction, was presented by him to her on her birth-day, and was worn by her with delight; and the week after Nicholas received from London a box containing a set of the most perfect tools for his trade that had ever been seen in the country, with a fine microscope and a life of Flamstead the astronomer, a branch of their family, with these lines written in it—"Go on, Nicholas Flamstead, and confer the like lasting honour on your family; if not through science—then through virtue."

It must have been at this period that our friend John Fox was the comrade of Nicholas Flamstead, and accompanied him in those frequent visits to Dainsby, which appeared to have made indelible and delightful impressions on his memory; but whence John Fox came, or who he was, does not by any means appear. Could he be a fellow-apprentice? Or could he be some young lawyer's clerk of the little town of Alfreton? Or was he—but we have never met with any one who could give a clear answer to these queries; and John Fox was, of all persons, the most reserved on the subject. It seemed to affect him deeply, and make him, as a friend was once heard to express it, "introvert himself, and roll himself up in his inner man into the compass of a half-penny ball." We will leave these unprofitable questions, therefore, and pursue the history of Nicholas.

On the expiration of his short apprenticeship, he went to London to perfect himself—if with the hope of being one day lord mayor, he did not succeed—for, a year afterwards, his old master dying, he came down to Alfreton and took his business. The opening of Nicholas Flamstead's shop was an era in that

little town. For generations had its watch and clock trade jogged on in the same easy, sleepy, unadvancing way ; it was not a progress, but a stand-still in the art. At once Nicholas dismissed all the old stock, at a price that tempted the country people, who were willing to carry watches as large as turnips, and set up clocks that seemed the work of Tubal Cain. He opened on a market-day with such a blaze of new articles, as fairly struck the people dumb with amaze. What lovely little gold and silver watches ! What handsome clocks and time-pieces in mahogany cases, and in gold ! What new constructions of works, and what wonders had Nicholas to exhibit and explain to the customers. The consequence was, that scarcely a person within twenty miles round was now satisfied with his watch. He or she must have one of the new construction, or principle, as Nicholas called it. There was no talk but about levers, escape movements, chronometers and engine-turning, and ornamental engraving of cases.

Nicholas was soon compelled to run up a row of new workshops, light and airy, and had such a row of men at work in them, as had never been seen in Alfreton before. People said that people might live on clocks and watches instead of learn the time by them. But it was not simply for Alfreton and the country round, it was for London, that Nicholas worked. He could afford to work cheaper in this cheap neighbourhood, than could be done in London ; and as his work was equal to anything there, it was ordered by London houses, and was sent down again to various towns, and even abroad.

Nicholas Flamstead was a flourishing man, and not even his father would have been ashamed of him. But during his abode in London both father and

mother were gone to their ancestors: his brother Sykes was now married, and had one little boy. Sykes's wife, who was a very delicate and lady-like woman, did not at all appear to despise the prosperous Clockmaker. Many of her own relations, in fact, in Derby, were connected with trade, and she was too sensible not to know the value of it. Nicholas took a particular fancy to his little nephew; used to carry him out on a Sunday, when he came to Dainsby, to show him the birds' nests in the hedges; and begged that they would let the little fellow, who was now four years old, come and see him. This was done at once, and often; for Mrs. Flamstead whispered to her husband that there was nothing like letting rich uncles take a fancy to children, and her husband, not quite so sagaciously, began to say, "Why, Nicholas may never marry; I shouldn't think he would. He seems quite cut out for an old bachelor, and in fact is married to his clock-making."

People are very apt to see this cut of the old bachelor about their well-to-do relations, even when they are young. In what it consists, however, it would often not be so very easy to say. I am sure it would not in the case of Nicholas Flamstead. He was a young, active, sensible, social man; that he admired a fair, and, still more, a sensible, woman, any body could see; that he was fond of children, was seen by his liking to his nephew. But as, in this case, the wish was probably "father to the thought," we need not here further pursue the inquiry. In short, little Henry Flamstead used often to be driven over in the carriage to his uncle's, and here, seated in a tall chair, he would sit for hours by his uncle and watch his work. It would not have been easy to say which was fonder of the other, the uncle or

the nephew. Nicholas invented all sorts of pieces of machinery for the little boy with bells and larums, which, as they noisily ran down, made the little fellow laugh till he shouted, or, as his delighted uncle said, "chinked again." Others were little men sawing, and water-wheels; and at last Nicholas even made the hardy request to present him with a splendid cuckoo clock, in a great chinese case, to stand in the hall at Dainsby. There was but one point on which he knew that his gift would find a repulsion in the feelings of the parents, and that was to see on a clock in Dainsby Old Hall, the name of a **FLAMSTEAD, MAKER**; but this, with a delicacy worthy of a true man of merit, he laughingly told them should not appear there till he could set under it—lord mayor of London!

Fortune now seemed to shower her favours on Nicholas; his business was such as must in a few years insure wealth, and at once wealth fell on him from another quarter. His mother's sister, whom he had merely seen when he was but a boy, as his nephew Henry was now, died and left him ten thousand pounds. She had not disdained to marry a London tradesman, and knew not only how to discover merit but how to reward it in a few words. "To my nephew, Nicholas Flamstead, Clockmaker of Alfreton, Derbyshire, who disdained to be useless to society, and was too proud to be a gentlemanly beggar—Ten Thousand Pounds."

"Well, now Nick will drop the clocks and watches to a certainty," said his brother Sykes triumphantly. "I don't believe he will," said Mrs. Sykes Flamstead; and she was right. The ten thousand pounds was well invested, and it remained there. The shop of Nicholas Flamstead was as full of watches, wheels,

and swinging pendulums as ever. Nobody could see that the ten thousand pounds made a hair's difference to the life, views, or prospects of Nicholas Flamstead.

But precisely at the moment when Nicholas seemed more wedded to his business than ever, he astonished the whole country. All at once, there was a rumour that he had disposed of his business to a London house and had disappeared. He had ridden over to Dainsby on the Sunday, and had taken a very kind leave of them, saying that he was going a longish journey. The nursemaid said that she had never seen Mr. Nicholas so fond of little Henry, nor kiss him so when he went away; and what astonished them all no little, when the boy came to be undressed there was found a most beautiful gold watch with a gold chain in his pocket, inscribed within the case, "To Henry Flamstead, as a remembrance from his uncle Nicholas." The watch was declared soon afterwards by a maker to be worth a hundred guineas. Scarcely was the report of the disposal of his business abroad, which was found by the family to be true, than a hundred other obscure and contradictory reports flew about. One said, "Ay, Mr. Nicholas was a shrewd fellow. He was too wise, with ten thousand pounds, to stick all his life to a watch-maker's shop; he would see the world, and did not want the fuss of leave-taking." Another hinted that there was a lady in the affair: that his visits to London had been much more frequent than usual, and his stay there a fortnight at a time, which might be true enough when he was about, from whatever cause, disposing of his concern. About a month afterwards a hat was found on the banks of Butterly Reservoir, a large sheet of water not many miles from Alfreton, and although it had evidently lain

long under water, or been drenched with rain, till it had lost too much of its shape, and all trace of name, of wearer or maker, there were not wanting those who declared that it somehow strangely reminded them of Nicholas Flamstead. This excited a great sensation. The Flamsteads made all the possible inquiries after the particulars of these matters, and after Nicholas in London. Nowhere, however, could anything be learned of his movements, excepting this important fact, that he had by a power of attorney lodged the ten thousand pounds in the hands of an eminent banking-house, with this strict and literal order, that the said sum of ten thousand pounds should remain in its present investment, and the proceeds of it be also invested by the said house according to the best of its judgment; and that the whole amount of capital and accumulated interest, or investment of that interest, should remain till further written order, or the return of the said owner. In case he did not return or send such order, the said sum should remain in the said hands till the period when he, the said owner, should have arrived at the natural age of eighty years, a reason for this being given that many of the owner's ancestors had lived to that age. Failing all order or return till that period, the whole accumulated sums should then be paid over to the owner's nephew, Henry Flamstead, if surviving, or to his children if dead, in equal shares. Failing issue on the part of the said Henry Flamstead, the sum should go to build at Alfreton, hospitals for poor clock and watchmakers of Derbyshire, with a stipulated weekly allowance.

The discovery of this singular fact gave a new and active stimulus to the inquiries on the part of the family of the missing clockmaker. A missing man

with ten thousand pounds is worth looking after. Every rumour, therefore, of men being found in this pond, and that river, was instantly attended to; every inquiry was made amongst his own acquaintances and connections in town and country, but he neither floated up out of any water nor any society. A few months after his disappearance there was a slight clue to something like a love-affair laid hold of in London, but nothing definite was made out. The lady was gone out to India with her family, and there was not one of their remaining friends that could make more of the rumour than a rumour. This clue, however, slight as it was, gave a direction to the inquiries of Nicholas's brother; and it was soon clearly ascertained that he had actually, within a week of his leaving Dainsby, embarked in the India-man, *Alicawn*, for the Cape of Good Hope. The result of inquiries at the Cape were not, however, very satisfactory. He had not gone to India with the *Alicawn*, yet no trace of him was to be found in the Cape Colony. For aught any one could tell, he might be gone off to locate himself with the Caffres or Hottentots, or to explore the interior. There was a shipping clerk who seemed to recollect such a gentleman at one time hovering about the harbour, and being particularly anxious in his inquiries after a certain ship expected from England on its voyage to India. But when further pressed to refresh his memory and add other particulars, they were so unlike anything belonging to Mr. Nicholas Flamstead that they only nullified his previous statements.

Here for a long time all intelligence stopped. That Nicholas had been at the Cape was certain, but how, or when, he went thence, was wrapped in impenetrable gloom. The matter seemed to have exhausted all

rational conjecture, and to sleep ; when about two years afterwards, some one accidentally saw in an American paper the name of a Mr. Nic. Flamstead as that of a rising senator in one of the Western States. It turned out, however, to be, in reality, a Mr. Nicander Flemsted, a Dane. This incident, nevertheless, did not quench curiosity, it only turned into a particular field the eyes of the inquirers, and these now were not a few, for the mysterious disappearance of a man of so much substance was become almost a public topic. It was a most interesting riddle which various people found various good reason for desiring to solve. Colonial papers were eagerly explored, and it was not long before sanguine hopes were entertained that the retreat of the fugitive would be detected. There were seen some advertisements of some very large flocks of sheep, and an immense stock of wool, for sale in the district of Sidney, New South Wales, the property of a Mr. N. Flamstead. What so likely as that Nicholas should have shipped himself from the Cape for New Holland, and embarked in what appeared then the most promising of speculations—the growth of Australian wool. It was recollected that Nicholas as a boy had been much captivated by the relation of Colonial adventure ; and that, moreover, he had been very fond of sheep ; and bestowed much attention on them on the farm. Eager were the inquiries now sent out to Sidney, and in about twelve months more a very circumstantial account was received, that the Mr. N. Flamstead, in question, was a Mr. Noah Flamstead, a well-known and very wealthy citizen of Sidney, of at least seventy years of age, and having equally well-known correspondents in London, to whom the inquirers were referred. These repeated

disappointments now, indeed, did cool the ardour of search ; the relations were reluctantly compelled to await the events of time, yet now scarcely more than half hoping that even this would clear up the singular fate of the Clockmaker. But their hopes were destined to receive a speedy revival. A clerk, at Lloyd's, turning over a file of Indian papers for a very different object, accidentally fell on the account of a duel which had been fought in the suburbs of the city of Bombay, and in which the name of Mr. Nicholas Flamstead occurred at full length as the challenger. It was stated that the quarrel had arisen from a very singular and deeply interesting love-affair. The two opponents had been both zealous candidates for the hand of a young and lovely lady of good family, and of singular beauty and accomplishments, as well as of most fascinating disposition ; that, as is often the case, the one suitor had the favour of the lady, the other that of her family ; the intimacy had commenced in England ; the family had suddenly embarked for India, the father having received a high official appointment, and the two rivals, it would seem, had immediately followed. One, indeed, was supposed to have preceded the lady and her family. The date of these transactions was precisely that of the disappearance of Nicholas Flamstead ; and the duel had taken place within a month of the arrival of the parties. Nicholas Flamstead was actually the challenger ; his opponent was seriously but not mortally wounded. But that which gave the most singular and melancholy interest to this case was, that within six hours of the taking place of this *rencontre*, the lady, on whose account it had arisen, died of a rapid and malignant

disease of the country, apparently that which is now known by the name of the cholera.

These remarkable facts were immediately communicated to Mr. Sykes Flamstead, who hastened up to London and put in train, through a high official channel, the most efficient measures for ascertaining the identity of Mr. Nicholas Flamstead, the Clockmaker, with the Mr. Nicholas Flamstead of the duel. Such were the collateral facts of the case that there appeared very little doubt that these were one and the same man. The impatience with which the return of the Indian Mail was expected, may be imagined. It came—the gentleman had been readily found—the facts were all correctly stated; but the Mr. Nicholas Flamstead of the duel did not in any single particular correspond with that sent of the missing gentleman. Mr. Nicholas Flamstead, the Clockmaker, was described as a person of full form, five feet eight in height, of most decidedly formed features, a fair and ruddy complexion, with light-brown hair, and gray eyes. The Mr. Nicholas Flamstead of the duel was a tall, thin man, of a dark, sallow complexion, black shining hair, of a longish and saturnine countenance. He was¹ a merchant of extensive affairs—and was not related, nor had, indeed, heard of the Flamsteads of Dainsby.

From this time nothing further was heard of the Clockmaker. Not a rumour arose; not an inquiry was instituted; all conjecture seemed completely at fault, and a silence and oblivion fell over the actual fate of Nicholas Flamstead as profound as death itself. As years went on, the conviction that he could not possibly be in existence grew almost to certainty: there never came to the trustees of his property the slightest intimation from him or of his

existence. Ten, twenty, thirty, forty years rolled over, and it was the same. Most of the banking firm into whose hands the Clockmaker had committed his money, had successively departed this life; yet the property itself was as regularly attended to by their sons and successors as it had been by themselves. There wanted now but fifteen years till the time of the trust should expire, and the whole now swollen mass should devolve to the nephew of the vanished, and, pretty certainly defunct, Clockmaker. And what a sum it was! So well had the banking-house fulfilled its important trust; so well had it exercised the discretionary power vested in it, that the ten thousand pounds was not now become forty thousand, as in the regular course of accumulation, but by purchase into certain companies for public accommodation in the metropolis, and in particular into a certain water-company, that it had reached the actual sum of eighty thousand pounds! We may imagine the intense interest which every year added to the expectancy of this remarkable honey-fall. What speculations were there in many fanciful heads! Should the old man now actually appear! Should some claimant, one of these days, arrive with the written order or the will of the Clockmaker; some young Flamstead out of the back-settlements of some distant colony, and swoop upon and bear away the stupendous prize just as it seemed about to fall into the hands of the long-expectant party. The very thought was enough to drive a nervous man mad; nor were there wanting those good-natured people who took care to suggest these fever-fraught ideas to Mr. Henry Flamstead and his family. "It is really now, a long time, to be sure," they would say; "and as to all earthly probability one might call it a

settled thing—but, as the old proverb has it, ‘There is many a slip between the cup and the lip.’”

The Flamstead family, however, had at this time other goads of the world to sting and torture their feelings ; and it is now our duty to turn back and follow out another series of events.

CHAPTER VI.

NEW FORTUNES OF THE FLAMSTEADS.

DURING the period we have referred to in endeavouring to unearth the Clockmaker in his sudden burrowing down out of the cognizance of mankind, if he had not, indeed, become earthed for ever, the little nephew Henry had shot up into manhood. He bore, however, a very different aspect, stamp and spirit, to those of the old race of Flamsteads. *They* were sturdy, hardy, plodding yeomen ; Henry was tall and delicate in frame and aspect ; they had adhered remarkably to the homely and somewhat sordid way of living and thinking of their ancestors. Henry had the mind and bearing, the feelings and ideas of a gentleman, and that too of a sensitive and refined one. As a boy he was always more fond of his mother’s society than his father’s. He cared little for looking after the cattle, and the sheep ; after the men in the farm and at plough, as his father had done and wished him to do. He preferred riding his pony, and reading a book, or listening to the stories that his mother was accustomed to tell him. Nothing, however, delighted him so much as to accompany his mother in her walks and her visits.

His father used to say, “Why, Henry, you will never be good for anything ; you are a regular

bantling. You are always hanging to your mother's apron-string, like her pincushion. Out upon you!—you will be quite nesh * and girlish; nay, you must surely be meant for a girl."

The old, rough farmers of the village said, "Ay, here's a change! This is no chip of the old block. The Flamstead blood has run out—the Chetwynd blood (that of his mother's family) has got the uppermost, and master Henry will be none o' your clod-hoppers, but a thorough fine-fingered gentleman!"

There was a good deal of truth in the observations of both father and neighbours. Henry did really take extremely after his mother; and his affection for her was not greater than the influence of her tastes and feelings were all-powerful over him. She was a shrewd and, in many ways, a worldly-wise woman; but she was at the same time a very clever and lady-like one. She had higher tastes and accomplishments than had usually been the case with the Flamsteads' wives. She had moved in a much more refined circle. She had no child but Henry, and thus he became son and daughter, and everything to her. She had read a good deal, had a deal of imagination, and found in Henry a most willing listener to what there was no one besides at home who understood or appreciated in her. She inoculated Henry with her love of music and singing, as well as delighted him with her gifts in these respects; and thus, perhaps, still more softened his character, already too soft for his position.

As he grew up he was sent, through her influence, which was great over her husband, to a far higher school than any one of his ancestors had gone to—to one, indeed, where he found the sons of almost all

* Tender.

the gentry of his native county of his own age ; and this again not only refined his manners, but gave a more confirmed bias to his delicacy of taste. The robuster habits of the more robust and more practical portion of the boys he instinctively turned from. His growth, from his fifteenth to his twentieth year, was so rapid that the most serious fears of consumption were entertained ; and as he was the only child, these fears were proportionably stronger. He was, therefore, not once required by his father to devote his attention to the business of the estate, but with a servant and a due allowance was sent to travel in different parts of the kingdom, or was accompanied by his parents every summer to the sea-coast.

In his twentieth year he was a tall, slim youth, of a very delicate and yet somewhat rosy complexion ; yet this rose-hue was so soft and fugitive that the paleness of languor might often be seen usurping its place. He was of a very mild, quiet, and gentle manner ; and, no doubt from his sense of his frail hold of life, was of a decidedly religious turn of mind. At this age his father met with his death in a singular manner. He was out following the hounds of old Mr. Lowe, of Locko. They were crossing the moors at Horristan, when, coming in the heat of the pursuit to a sudden descent, which was covered with a glazing of ice, his horse fell, and he was precipitated with his head against a mass of stone that lay on the moor, and was taken up dead. His mother was so shocked at the news that she was seized with spasms of the chest ; which, though conquered apparently at the time, yet recurred again and again at different intervals with such violence, that the medical man apprehended their approach to the region of the heart ; that she would probably one

day expire suddenly. This, in fact, took place, as she sate after dinner in a particularly gay humour. The housekeeper had come in with some story of a ludicrous nature, which had just occurred in the village, at which she was so much amused that she laughed heartily, and in the midst of her mirth, laying her hand suddenly on her heart, said painfully "Oh, Heavens!" and expired in her chair.

The Flamsteads had usually been a tolerably long-lived family, and there had most frequently been seen here an old grandfather occupying the easy-chair, when the children of the son in his prime were playing around it. But here, now, was the sole descendant of the race left suddenly alone in his house at the age of twenty-one, and that with so frail an apparent hold on life, that it well might create fears of the endurance of the line. There was also reason in the state and habits of Henry Flamstead for the wondering of the neighbours how it would be with the management of the estate. "Mr. Henry," said they, "is no farmer; he is no man of business; he will probably let the property and go and live somewhere else."

But Henry Flamstead had more strength of character than of constitution; he did not pretend to be his own farmer, had no great taste for it, nor faith in his own skill; but he selected a superior working man, and made him his farmer and bailiff, and found it answer extremely well. He rode over his lands every day, and conversed with this man on all the agricultural matters. He shot, and fished, and coursed with great enjoyment. Everybody was surprised to see that not only did his affairs go on well, but that he evidently improved in health and spirits. But he was a solitary man here; his tastes differed

much from those of his neighbours. He was always kind and affable with them, but he wanted other society, and this he used to seek very much among his mother's relatives in Derby, and the following spring he suddenly surprised the whole of Dainsby by bringing home, as his wife, a fair lady, one of his own cousins. This lady, who was as near as possible of his own age, was a lively, sunny-looking woman, who seemed to have no other object of admiration or of ambition but her husband. She was a fair, blue-eyed, happy-looking creature, that made a sunshine in the house, and, indeed, soon throughout the whole village. Many said that Mr. Henry, who was a man that might have picked and chosen anywhere amongst the ladies of the county, had not shown much wordly wisdom by selecting his pretty cousin who had no fortune; but those who saw Mrs. Flamstead with the eyes of true discernment, saw that she was one of the pearls of great price that Solomon speaks of. Perhaps she was a little too much like her husband in tone of mind, a little too gentle and soft; perhaps some one of more energy and will had been better; but it might be that a change after all would not have been more blessed in its results. Henry had brought genuine sunshine—heart and soul sunshine into his house which filled and irradiated every room of it with a feeling of love and peace; and instead of that he might have had, as was said, more energy and will in the shape of a—tempest.

As it was, time rolled on blissfully. Henry Flamstead saw almost every year a fresh chubby cherub on his hearth. There grew up in this beautiful sunshine a sound of laughter, a hum as of bees, a singing as of larks and throstles, and if we could but

have looked into the breakfast-room of Dainsby Old Hall some fine May morning, we should have seen one of the most delightful scenes of mortal happiness that the rolling earth could show us. There sat the lively, sunny mother on one side of the table ; there, on the other, the happy and gay father, and all round on either hand such a troop of sunny, rosy, chatting children, as might well make the parents look so bright and benignant, and feel that heaven really did begin on earth. There you would have probably seen the windows open, and have perceived from the sunny garden the odorous breath of flowers come stealing in warm as if mixed with sunbeams, and the chirp of sparrows, and the sonorous cawing of rooks in the lofty new-leaved elms, till Dainsby Old Hall was not full of life and joy within only, but without also. Oh ! how much do the evidences of life and gladness go together ! Can the bird sing, and the flowers breathe forth sweetness, and the very rooks caw with lustiness and joy around the dwellings of care and of guilt ? We can scarcely believe it — we can scarcely acknowledge the probability of such a thing. If it exists, one's ears and hearts are deaf to it ; but when the music of existence rings joyously from the hearth-stone how its reverberations seem to waken accordant tones in the open air, and heaven and earth, sky and water, seem to sing together.

But could we look again into this old breakfast parlour, we should perceive a solemn hush. There is an air of gravity on those beaming, childish faces ; the father utters the expressive words of thankfulness and blessing to which the very ancestors on the walls seem to listen, and then again all is eager merriment. There are white dresses and girlish figures clustering around the mother as she goes down the

long, old walks, and beside those green walls of clipped box, and arrows and balls are flying up in the blue air from boyish hands; there are ponies mounted, and away with the father over field and hill; or sober voices are calling to sober hours of study. So flew on many days and many years—how different to the days of old at Dainsby.

But there was a still greater change in the life and spirit of things there. Henry Flamstead had retained all the religious feeling of his early youth, but he had in some degree forsaken the religion of his ancestors. The Vicar of Dainsby was also the Vicar of Brexdell, a place at some distance. He was an old bachelor and a sordid one. Once a week he came and performed Divine service in the church, and that was all that his parishioners saw of him. This created great discontent. It was what had never occurred before. The living of Dainsby was quite sufficient for the maintenance of a minister, and the parsimony of its incumbent would not afford it a curate. The people petitioned the vicar zealously for a resident curate, and Mr. Henry Flamstead took the lead. It was in vain; and what was more, it only angered the vicar. The methodists now becoming strong, numerous, and active, soon saw the vacant field and stepped into it. At first they preached in the open air; no one invited them under a roof, and only the poor stood and heard them. But soon this gathering of the poor increased. They praised the new preachers—they compared them with their own vicar. The contrast provoked remarks amongst the farmers; the discontent grew, and first one and then another went out to hear. Suddenly there was an event which made a sensation through the whole place. Farmer Westbrook had

offered the methodists his barn, and invited the preachers to make his house their place of call. A revolution was now begun—a strife, a convulsion, that had pretty much in the same manner gone through almost every parish in England. It was a real civil war between church and schism; between old things and opinions, and the new. The poor almost with one voice and spirit crowded to the new banner of devotion; the farmers were arrayed in opposite ranks. Some even who had been loudest against the vicar now became silent for a time, and then as loud on the other side. They were wroth with the pastor, but they were loyal to the church. Amongst these was Henry Flamstead. Much as he was disgusted with the vicar, he had never anticipated any change like this. His friends, educational and ancestral opinions and prejudices, leaned all the other way; but, at the same time, he was too liberal and enlightened to prefer utter neglect of the people, only too common then in country places, to zeal and attention to them. He stood, therefore, long zealously aloof from this new movement. He watched it, and heard what was said for and against it. But at length when he heard, particularly in more genteel circles, and by those who had previously taken no pains to judge for themselves, the most absurd and false stories of the methodist proceedings, his just and generous feelings impelled him to explain, to rectify, and justify. As he still watched the effects of the new proceedings, and saw order, industry, sobriety, and intelligence taking place of ignorance and demoralization, he said, “there can be no mistake here—there is no doubt which of these two things to choose—there can be no question whether we shall have zealous pastors or careless ones—an earnest, con-

tented, and reformed people or sottish ignorance, and the ale-house flourishing more than the house of worship ;” and the people of Dainsby were soon after treated to a new surprise in seeing Mr. Henry Flamstead and his family walk into the barn, and seat themselves just before the preacher.

From that day their attendance was regular, and within three months the most substantial leaders of the methodist congregation were invited one evening to meet Mr. Flamstead at the Hall, and were transported with the communication of the fact, that it was his wish to present them with a piece of ground upon which to build a chapel, and two hundred and fifty pounds towards its erection. We can well imagine the sensation which this news, like a flash of lightning, shot through the parish. We need not add more than that within a year a handsome chapel stood complete in the midst of Dainsby, and that the family pew of the Flamsteads stood empty in the church, whilst a neat one near the pulpit of the chapel was duly seen filled with the squire’s family.

The consequent revolution which this circumstance occasioned in the life and connections of Mr. Flamstead it requires no great stretch of imagination to perceive. In the country at large he was a shunned and marked man. He was regarded as a traitor to the established church, as a silly enthusiast, as a weak fanatic, as a vain, ambitious man, who preferred to be at the head of a party, to being the quiet, stanch, respectable pillar of a great national fabric. All these charges and assertions he had calculated upon, and knew how to bear. He was flung for society very much upon the people of his own parish, and on a class in worldly rank far inferior to what he had been accustomed to mingle with. On

the other hand he found himself actively occupied and bound up with a new class of interests. He was placed actually at the head of a new religious movement in his own neighbourhood. His example gave a fresh *éclat* and life to the cause. Most of what he believed to be of eternal importance he now saw depending essentially upon himself. He came into contact and correspondence with the active movers of a new and great system ; linked up, even in this secluded corner, with the vital action of the whole world. The missions of his own people, and the intelligence which came, both through ever-arriving new preachers, and the " Methodist Magazine," opened up a world, vast and incalculable in its influences on mankind, that gave a new impulse and value to existence.

Time ran on—Henry Flamstead, by the active duties that had devolved on him, by having to act and think for others, was, as every one saw, become a much more practical, busy, managing character than he was before. He not only thought and worked for the society, but he thought and worked for his family. He had, in a few years after his joining the Methodist body, no fewer than five children around his table, and every prospect of a steady increase of the number ; this was another new feature of the Flamstead family, and he could not, like his forefathers, look with a sloth-like indifference to the future fortunes of his children. Circumstances not only infused new spirit into him, but into the times. The great war of French aggression was raging all over Europe. Napoleon, like a new incarnation of the ancient spirit of universal domination, with the terrific powers of more truly scientific than civilized Europe to work with, was overrunning the nations, and making the proudest monarchs stoop like slaves.

The price of all agricultural produce in still free and active England rose to a pitch that made men regard land as so much gold that only wanted shovelling up. It was greedily bought up on all sides. The higher it rose in consequent value the greater became the mania of its acquisition. Mr. Flamstead was not exempt from this contagion. He found his corn such a mine of wealth that he naturally looked out for still more land, not only as an investment for surplus capital, but as a source of such brilliant returns. He bought extensively; and from year to year as his taste for purchase was universally perceived, more and more was offered to him by shrewd and differently calculating men, at prices, which however exorbitant did not then appear so.

By the time that some of his elder children were assuming the forms of men and women, Henry Flamstead found himself in possession of five times the extent of the earth's surface that had ever acknowledged the ownership of his family.

If we were now to take another peep at Dainsby Old Hall and the Flamstead family, we should find it as bright and charming a scene of human happiness as the green vales of England could present to us, in all their woody mazes, or on all their sunny slopes. There were nine young Flamsteads gathered around their parents. The eldest of these was a daughter, a gentle creature much resembling her father in person and character, bearing the name of Elizabeth in the baptismal record, but known in the family only by that of Betsy. The next was a son, George, an active, light-hearted, vigorous youth, in whom his father delighted to find wondrous resemblance to his uncle, the Clockmaker; and the third was another daughter, a shorter and merrier creature than her

sister—a maiden with all the sunny form and bright-heartedness of her mother—the little, domestic Anne. Nobody, however, would picture her by that word—she was the good and blithe Nancy. As these young people will have presently to figure in this family story, we give this brief sketch of their personalities, and leave the younger herd at present to their games and their sunshine.

Within and without Dainsby Old Hall had now an air of prosperous joy. Its walls, roof, windows, and wood-work were in the most bright and perfect order. New stables and out-buildings had been added, and the whole, instead of staring across the lawn, had been planted off by a screen of young trees. Beyond these, if you penetrated, you soon found yourself in an extensive farm-yard, where all modern improvements, both in live stock and their habitations and accommodations, were the most conspicuous. The fine dairy, the stately bullocks at straw before the great open doors of the barn, where a thrashing machine was knocking out the corn at a rate that would have amazed the owner's grandfather; the shapely swine, the broods of poultry, peacocks, guinea-fowls, ducks, geese, turkeys, and hens—all testified to the reign of abundance. If it were winter, the tall oxen, as we have said, were feeding from cribs before the great barn-doors, or were luxuriously feeding on turnips and beet-root cut for them with new and rapid machines. If it were summer, what a scene of beauty was presented by the sleek and mottled herds, and the gay steeds grazing in the rich meadows before the house. To the house itself there ran a new carriage road, with a proud sweep through shrubbery and flower-bordered woodlands; and handsome carriages rolled lightly along it,

conveying visitors from neighbouring families, for Mr. Henry Flamstead was too influential and prosperous a man to be entirely cut, even for his Methodism, especially with the princely sum into which the wealth of the Clockmaker was rolling itself for him and his children, in view. The family carriage itself was rich and well appointed, and truly did handsome and happy faces beam from it as it passed along. At times, too, a troop of young horsemen and horsewomen dashed out from its gates and away through the neighbouring country, or came hurrying in at the clamorous tone of the dinner bell.

Everything seemed to glide on at Dainsby Old Hall in a joyous, easy, full and flowing course ; there was, in its truest sense, peace and plenty within its walls. "The rich man has many friends," and Mr. Henry Flamstead was rich. Around his table were frequently assembled the most cordial and radiant faces. From London, from many a part of the kingdom, came the ministers and agents, and the leading members of the religious body with which the family were united. Some of their highest pleasures were in their great religious meetings and gatherings in town and country, and in the presence of the great men of the connection.

The young people had no lack of associates of their own age, and to them, in this glad season of their existence, life indeed wore a sunlit face. George had finished his education, and one of his most intimate comrades at Repton school was also now a comparatively near neighbour, and an almost constant guest in the family. Robert Nadell was a solitary person in his own little hamlet of Millbrook, for he was the only child of a gentleman of good property there, and it was not to be wondered at that he was glad to get

away as often as possible into so cheerful and happy a scene as that which surrounded his old schoolfellow. They fished, rode, shot, coursed together; they worked industriously at the various mechanical labours of turning, joinering, and even wagon and plough-making, of which George was passionately fond. He had actually engaged a skilful wheelwright and farming-implement maker, and was daily to be found busily employed in the shop, working away with mallet and chisel as admirably as any apprentice in the trade. Nay, he came eventually to pride himself on being able, if need were, to turn out as good a plough, pair of harrows, winnowing machine, or wagon, and paint them, too, and then use them, as any man in England. Here again his father saw the mechanical turn of his uncle Nicholas, and would often say, "What would he not give that the Clock-maker could see George at his labours."

We must not, however, pretend that the young Robert Nadell was so much enamoured of wagon and cart-making as of other objects at the Hall. My young readers would justly smile at my want of observation if I did not at once tell them that I have long been aware, from the moment that he appeared upon the scene, that there were other attractions at Dainsby Old Hall, which drew him thither so continually. Nay, I will at once confess that George Flamstead would often come running into the house, with a loud cry of "Robert! Robert! where in the world is that fellow gone to now again? What, cutting papers? when I want you to strike with the great hammer! Come along, the wheel is ready to be tired, and here you are!"

Robert, in fact, soon became the declared and the accepted lover of Miss Flamstead, and as George and

he had long seemed more like brothers than friends, Robert seemed now to become really the brother of the whole young group, and one of the family. There was scarcely a day that he was not there, and in all their rides and walks, their amusements, and their serious and religious occupations and engagements, he was seen taking part. Time rolled on gallantly at Dainsby Old Hall; it was, indeed, one of the most perfect of earth's paradises. Youth, rejoicing in innocence and love, and the daily course of life filled up with duties that gave peace to the heart, and bound it up in sympathy with the interests of men.

CHAPTER VII.

A CLOUD ON THE SUNSHINE.

UNSTABLE and precarious as is human prosperity, that of the Flamsteads appeared to most eyes as likely to endure as that of any mortal lot whatever. There was so much property, so much virtue, so much domestic affection, as well as apparent health. Yet the Flamsteads were not exempt from their quota of enemies and croakers; there were those who were fond of comparing Henry with his ancestors, and commenting on the difference. The simple old folks, how homely, how careful, how plodding they had been. There was a pretty change here. This Mr. Henry Flamstead, why, he was quite a fine, delicate gentleman—his own fathers would not have known him. They used to trudge about over their fields, and after their ploughmen. He went jaunting on a fine horse—they used to stop a gap or dig a post-hole, if necessary, with their own hands; he would not soil his fingers with his native earth, but

went about with gloves on his hands, as if it were always winter. They went to attend at all fairs and markets, and made all their bargains about corn and cattle themselves; he kept a bailiff to do all that. They were contented to drive a gig—and Mr. Henry's father had only an open carriage—here now was an open carriage, a close carriage, and a pony carriage. They used to keep little company, and old-fashioned hours, and spread old-fashioned fare on their table—here, who could tell out of what regions all the folks, gentle and simple, came. From the *four* winds, nay, from forty winds, did they seem to blow together. Gentry, preachers—heaven could tell who or what they were, but never was there a week, and often not a day, but somebody was posting up to the Hall. Well, well! it used to be said that “a penny saved is a penny got,” and that “many birds picking at the barn-door would soon bring ninepence to a groat;” but here, if people could believe their eyes, all the old maxims were proved to be nonsense, for the more there was spent, the more there was left behind. “Time would show,” added they, however, with a sort of self-consolatory reflection and a knowing nod.

Others, again, when it was remarked what a vast quantity of land Mr. Flainstead had bought, asked if they knew as certainly that it was all paid for; or if paid for to the seller, as was generally said to be the case, whether there might not be heavy mortgages lying on it. If the old Flamsteads had not laid up an unknown hoard, this must be the case. Many inquiries were made on this head, and yet nothing could be discovered. Joy and plenty sat on the towers of Dainsby Old Hall and the curious wondered, and the pious saw it as the blessing of God.

The mystery, however, which the simple people

of Dainsby could not clear up, I can, and now will. There *were* heavy mortgages on the newly-purchased lands. Mr. Henry Flamstead was but one amongst a most extensive class, who saw, in the high value given to landed produce by the war, a means offered, and which once gone could never recur, of making a great increase to their estates. The extra proceeds of their estates, at a moderate calculation, would, in twenty years at least, double them. The firm elevation, the extensive conquests, the active arrangements of Napoleon, coupled with his unparalleled military genius, seemed to their imaginations to present a prospect of the continuance of this state of things, when the determined resistance of Great Britain was taken into the account, to which no man could set a precise termination. Under this impression, as I have said, great and numerous purchases were made, and money taken up upon them, which was to be annually paid off by instalments, and the most confident certainty was entertained that ten or more years, according to the amount of produce, would see all debt cleared off, and the family prosperity thus magnificently augmented.

Unfortunately for numbers of these sanguine speculators, Providence had set a nearer bound to the bloody course of Napoleon than the shrewdest politician could prognosticate; the soaring spirit of presumption, puffed up by unparalleled success, was to find, not from the hand of man, but from the right arm of the Almighty, wrapped in the tempests and the frozen terrors of the north, its first and effectual check. At the sublime signal of Heaven, the nations rose in countless legions; the Cossacks, and the very Tartars, came sweeping down from the wall of China; and, like the locusts from the East, covered

the face of the earth, and chased the discomfited Emperor to his own imperial city, and into the victorious power of England. At once peace returned; all Europe felt a sudden revulsion, as from the excitement of delirium to the stupor of temporary inanition. All the towering schemes and prices incident on this great and unnatural war toppled down, and buried such speculators as Henry Flamstead by thousands in their ruins. Before the artificial breakwater of the corn bill could be cast up against the reflux tide of prices and circumstances, the ruin of numbers was complete. The fall in the price of land was so great, that in many instances that which was bought was not only lost, but it swallowed up that which the possessor had before. How many families can yet testify with sorrow, and from the depths of irremediable poverty, to these facts.

Mr. Flamstead's purchases, extensive as they were, did not, however, necessarily involve anything like ruin. Had he had no expectations, he must have been compelled to let all his possessions go, and to have encumbered his original estate considerably to have discharged the still surplus debt upon it, but then there was the rapidly accumulating property of the Clockmaker, which, from that time, in twenty years, must, if no claimant from the vanished owner appeared, which now seemed totally improbable, fall in and discharge everything, and leave also a handsome addition to his wealth. This he was able to shew to his creditors, and so reasonable did it appear, that they were for the most part ready to leave their mortgages as they were, in reliance on a statement which he laid before them, by which it appeared that by a system of rigid economy, and by other plans, he could, in the meantime, manage to defray the annual

interest. It was evident, indeed, that a most radical change must take place in the whole mode of life, views, and occupations of the Flamstead family. The carriage must be laid down; all unnecessary horses be disposed of; a simple and strict plan of housekeeping must be adopted, and strictly adhered to; and that liberal hospitality which had made Dainsby Old Hall the genial and happy resort of so many, must receive a check as frosty and repugnant to the dispositions of the owners, as that of the frosts and snows of Russia had been to Napoleon. All these things, however, under a sense of duty, and an animating hope that success would eventually crown their exertions, sanctify their sacrifices, and make all in the end well, were most cheerfully borne by every member of the family; and this, and the sound unity and strong affection of the whole kindred group, made them treat with indifference the outward coldness which always follows the overclouding of the sun of fortune, and the ill-natured sneers which the envious shot about like burning arrows at the bared heads that were left exposed by evil chance to their assaults.

There was a shadow, a gloom, but not a darkness; a hush, but not a horror, fallen on Dainsby Old Hall, and well would it have been if this state of things had remained; but it is rare when so great a shaking comes on a house if it do not continue to crack, its foundations to give way, and its walls to open wider chasms, threatening even total ruin. It was soon found to be the case here, and as is usually the fact, the further mischief came from a quarter where there was the least apparent adverse momentum.

Amongst the creditors of Mr. Henry Flamstead, there were two from whom he had borrowed a joint sum on his note of five hundred pounds. The sum

was so small, that it was not deemed of sufficient importance to secure it by mortgage. It was, indeed, such a sum as Mr. Flamstead held himself qualified to pay off at any short notice, and had taken it on that condition. The owners of this sum were two men who were closely connected by marriage, they had in fact married two sisters, and they were as closely connected in trade. They were from the neighbouring town of Belper; the one a frame-smith, the other a sinker-maker. These terms are probably sufficiently obscure to the general reader to require some explanation, as they are of local existence. The frame-smith is the smith who makes the stocking-loom or frame, as it is called where it is mostly used, in Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, and Leicestershire. The sinker-maker is the maker of the sinkers or strips of iron belonging to the machinery of the frame, and which derive their name from sinking down upon the woof and pressing it into its proper place. So little is known even of the existence of such a trade in other parts of the country, that some years ago a Conservative paper in Liverpool, describing some radical political procession at Nottingham, which it did in sufficiently depreciatory terms, added, "And there were sinker-makers, too, a kind of fellows whose business we do not understand, but which the very name indicates to be among the lowest of the low."

Now though the business of a sinker-maker has nothing necessarily in it to cause its practisers to be the "lowest of the low," yet it so happened that the sinker-maker who was a joint proprietor of this five hundred pounds might without any outrage on justice have been classed in that category. His name was Ned Stocks, and that of his friend and brother-in-law, the framesmith, Peter Snape. Ned Stocks and Peter

Snape were so much of a genus, and so much impressed by the same operating causes with the like qualities and character, that there could be no need under any circumstances to attempt a distinction between them. They were, in fact, in almost every particular, inseparable. They were of the same or of nearly the same age, about fifty; they had a considerable personal resemblance, and were so everlastingly together that they had often been taken for twins. They did not indeed live in one house, but they lived in two close adjoining ones, and their shops lay behind their houses, and were only divided by the road into their gardens, which gardens again were only separated by a common waik. They were men who had gone on from youth hammering and filing away amid heaps of iron and smithy-slag, and never were clean except on a Sunday, or when they went out on business, when they washed their hands and faces, leaving there a clearly defined boundary line of the old accumulation of smoke and iron-smut under their hair, ears, and in the hollows of their eyes. Nay, their whole skins were saturated with smut, so that it gave them what might truly be called dark complexions; and the same sombre sadness was incorporated into what they put on as their best or worky-day garments.

Good workmen were Ned and Peter, but that was the only point in which *good* could be applied to them. They were, in truth, two of the most thoroughbred grubs that ever crawled on the earth. Nay, the term grub does not suit them; it has something soft about it, and Ned Stocks and Peter Snape had nothing soft, not even their flesh. That was made, as it were, of iron wire, and their hearts might be supposed to be compounded of iron weights; they were

hard, hard, hard, from top to toe, from skin to centre, as their own bars of steel. They were harder, for they could shape and weld the bars—the bars, it might be believed, could never make any impression on them, not even to break their heads, for these seemed like Goliath's, as described by Thomas Ellwood;

“ Upon his head a pot of brass he wore.”

Their very ideas were hard and metallic, and moved in straight lines, like steam-engines on iron roads, but not so fast. They had grubbed on for nearly thirty years together in their trade, and had no living sentiment but to make money and put it out to interest. So gross and overpowering was this feeling, that it had, in reality, certainly cramped and contracted the way of their own fortune, for they scraped together every penny they could to put it out, and left themselves only just enough to keep their trade going in a very small way; and they took long credit for themselves that they might have the cash which ought to have paid their debts, out at interest.

Such were the two hopeful creditors of Henry Flamstead, who, when every enlightened man was satisfied with his statement, remained dissatisfied. They had taken alarm; the country was in a state of alarm; there were every day the most awful details in the newspapers of bankruptcies, and sales of estates for debt, and they had but one idea of safety—that was to see with their own eyes, and handle with their own hands—their money.

Accordingly it was not many days after Mr. Henry Flamstead had requested a private interview with his creditors, and of Ned and Peter among them, when those two worthies again appeared at the Hall, and said that they had taken second thoughts, and they

would prefer having the money. The truth was, this had been their first and their only thought, but they had not dared to utter it in the presence of so many great and respectable gentlemen. For these sordid reptiles, though the very thunder of heaven would not be able to turn them out of their own ignorant and obstinate track, had yet a slavish fear of intelligent and higher minds; or they had feared that had they expressed any dissatisfaction, that feeling might have spread, all might become as jealous as they were, that some one might be helped before them, and then there would be a scramble, and in the scramble a rending, and they might all come in only for a fragment. True, therefore, to the selfish instinct they went away in silence, and now returned in silence, and would be glad to have their money.

Mr. Flamstead told them that if they insisted upon it, they should have it; but as they knew the state of the money market, they were aware that he could not at once command even that sum, except on most extravagant conditions, and conditions therefore evidently detrimental to the securities on the estate of the other parties. They must therefore wait till the time required by their note—six months after notice.

As ignorant of all forms of business as they were greedy, they said—"Nay, but they must have it at once. The circumstances," said they, "made them uneasy, and justified their demanding it at once." Mr. Flamstead steadily resisted this—he had in fact no means of doing otherwise, but offered, if they were at all anxious as to the nature of the security, to give them a mortgage on lands probably clear.

This, however, did not at all meet their views. They declared that they did not pretend to know what was clear and what was not; they only knew

that a deal of money was owing on the estate, and for ought they knew, more than it was worth. They seemed to catch additional alarm at the offer of a mortgage, as if it were only another means of binding them fast to the estate and the general case. They feared in their own minds that every man, like them, was only pretending on the day of meeting to be satisfied, in order secretly to pounce on the property and be served before the rest; they had therefore but one cuckoo note—"We mun ha' our money!"

Mr. Flamstead saw himself suddenly placed by these stupid and pig-headed fellows in a very delicate situation. If he made an effort and paid off these men, it would be trumpeted abroad, and the consequences, in the feverish state of the times, might be a general panic amongst his more heavily implicated creditors, and bankruptcy and total ruin be the result. If he refused them there was equal danger to be apprehended from their clamorous discontent. He therefore took a middle course, and proceeded to consult his attorney, and be advised by him whether to pay at an early day, or at the end of the six months. But it was easier, difficult as that was, to make up his own mind, than to get rid of these two leeches. They still sat doggedly in their chairs, saying that they would not go without their money. They remained there hours, spite of Mr. Flamstead telling them that he had not that sum of money in the house, and that he could not make money, and that it was therefore impossible that they could then and there receive it. On this Peter Snape gave a ghastly smile, and attempted the perpetration of a witticism.

"One would ha' thought," said he, "that yo could ha' made munny welly a while ago, yo seemed to

swell out into such grander. Yo did it rarely ; and now it comes t' th' pinch, yo canna pay a poor body a poor five hundred. Well, well, we mun see what's to be done."

With this they slowly withdrew, looking round them when they reached the lawn, as if they were actually afraid that not only Mr. Flamstead, but Dainsby Old Hall, might run away as soon as their backs were turned.

Dreadful was the night which Henry Flamstead did not sleep, but toss through, after the departure of these iron-souled fellows. He saw in perspective the degradations and difficulties which he might possibly have to go through. To be thus cramped and tortured for five hundred pounds ! Why, the very minerals under his estate were worth twenty thousand. He arose early and rode off to his attorney. His advice was to soothe the men. He knew them well, he said, and could assure him that not all the eloquence of Chatham would have the slightest power of persuasion to delay them. They were banded together like night and darkness—like death and sin ; their only feeling or conception was, that they wanted their money, and they would have it. He advised, therefore, to write to them and say that at the earliest possible day they should be paid off.

It is difficult to say what advice in this case would have been the best. Nothing but paying the money could remove the difficulty, and under the circumstances of the general lack of confidence in the country, that was a greater difficulty than all. The letter which, on his own suggestion, the attorney wrote, was, however, most disastrous. The two ravenous men appeared again the very next day at the Hall ; that, in their mind, was the earliest pos-

sible day, and they were as doggedly insolent, and importunate, and immoveable, as before. They took no notice of Mr. Flamstead's explanations, that the earliest possible day, in a case and in times like this, might be considered in a few weeks or a month. At that they only looked at one another, and then said, "It does na' sinnify, Mester Flamstead, we mun ha' our munny. Yo seem to ha' famous things here," looking around the room, "why dunna yo ca' a sale, and sell some on 'em and pay yo'r way?"

Henry Flamstead could not, wrung as his heart was, resist a smile at this, and he quietly observed, that it was not quite so bad as that yet. He had to endure their presence and their low drawling insolence for five mortal hours. To turn them out was, he knew, not be vertured on, unless the cash was ready to pay down the next day. So here he sat, begging them to take his word, and to withdraw for the present, as he had family matters to attend to.

"Take his word! how were they to take his word?" they asked; "had they not taken him at his word, and come there on his promise to pay them at the earliest possible day?"

They took the base opportunity when a servant came into the room on business, to raise their voices, and to say more loudly than ever, "We wanten our munny!—we mun ha' our munny!"

It was very difficult with Henry Flamstead to preserve his patience with these men—there was another person to who. it was more so—his son George, who, coming into the house while they were there, found his mother weeping, and his sisters, Betsy and Nancy, in a state of great excitement. To his questions as to the cause, the little impetuous Nancy gave answer in the most indignant terms, and

George catching the generous and contagious fire of his sister's zeal, over what she called "this shameful, this most detestable treatment of her father," declared, whilst all the blood in his body seemed to mount into his face, "That he would go in and pitch those two miserable old codgers to Jericho!"

Fortunately his father met him in the hall, and seeing his state of excitement, took him by the arm into another room, and told him that he felt and appreciated his affectionate sympathy, but he must now call upon him to show not only sympathy, but a wise prudence. One rash action, he represented to him, would now assuredly plunge them all into inconceivable difficulties and distress.

George at once declared that he saw it, and would restrain himself. He put such compulsion on himself, that he went in and told the men that his father had to attend to some unavoidable business, and was therefore obliged to leave them; he could not see them again that day, but that he was sure that his father's attorney would, in as little time as possible, arrange for the payment of the money. This intelligence Ned and Peter received with a simultaneous grunt, like two old wild boars. They departed without a word, but with significant glances at each other, and the next day brought a new personage on the scene.

This personage was Mr. Screw Pepper, an attorney of Derby. Mr. Screw Pepper was one of a very large class of attorneys. He was a man who had the reputation of being a desperate clever fellow, and as being pre-eminently a man of sharp practice. He had been the son of a hostler who was accustomed to bring up a gig from some livery stables, for a lawyer who regularly had it thence, and who, when the gig, as was often the case, had to wait long before the

lawyer's door, used to leave it in the care of his son, a great shock-headed lad, who soon attracted the lawyer's notice by the assiduousness of his attentions in holding the horse while he got in, and making the most profound bows for the two-pence that he often received. The lawyer soon afterwards wanting a boy to sweep out the office, and carry out messages, thought this the very lad for the purpose. In this post he displayed so much shrewdness that he eventually was put upon an office stool, and employed in copying voluminous documents. Here again his zeal and success were so great that his master saw in him the rough, hairy caterpillar, out of which a great hawk-moth of an attorney must certainly come ; and looking forward to his own ease in future years, when such a shrewd, active, and, as he hoped, humbly obsequious partner would be most invaluable, he had him articulated, and Screw Pepper rapidly became furbished up into a shabby-smart sort of a clerk, with clothes thread-bare, and almost bursting with his growing bulk, and with many jokes and insults to bear from the more genteel of his fellow clerks, but with a wonderful self-complacency, and an unbounded show of reverence for his master. He was accustomed on all occasions to hold up the said master as the most profound lawyer, and only held back by the jealous intrigues of the profession from being actually attorney-general. These praises were sure by some means to get to the ears of the said illustrious lawyer, and Mr. Screw Pepper stood in consequent favour with him. We need not pursue very minutely his office career. He went through the necessary years of clerkship with the greatest satisfaction to himself and employer, who was so proud of his discernment in the discovery of such an

acute and indefatigable legal genius that he advance the necessary means, and, after a short sojourn in London, Mr. Screw Pepper came down to his admiring friends a Master Extraordinary in Chancery, and was duly admitted as a partner in the firm of Lookout, Hook, and Pepper.

In this firm, however, Mr. Screw Pepper proved only too active and clever. He was far too clever for the united powers of observation and check of Messrs. Lookout and Hook, and these were by no means contemptible. He not only very soon dived into all the arcana of their practice and connections, but was found to be availing himself of them to his own exclusive benefit, in a manner that counselled as speedy a quittance of him as possible. On the abrupt dissolution of partnership which ensued great was the marvel and the curiosity. Lookout and Hook answered with grave and mysterious looks when spoken to on the subject, and strange stories to the disadvantage of Mr. Screw Pepper flew about. But Mr. Screw Pepper looked anything but cast-down or mortified by the change. He was, on all occasions, lively, smiling, bustling, and displaying a happy imperturbability to all the foolish qualities of shame and despondence. He also answered, when spoken to on the subject, with mysterious but with almost merry looks; and as to those stories to his disadvantage, they as suddenly dropped, at least into the most confidential whispers, as they had arisen, for Mr. Screw Pepper was not a man to be trifled with.

The good people of Derby soon saw him take a house, and open offices, small it must be confessed, but, like himself, with a smart, aspiring air about them. He and a single clerk made up the whole professional force in these offices, and there was but

a scanty display of japanned-boxes, bookshelves, and parchment under operation; yet Mr. Screw Pepper was so constantly in active motion, now with large-folded papers tied with red tape in his hand, going to and fro in the town, and now setting off by the coach with a huge great coat on his arm, and a boy carrying his carpet-bag, that people said the fellow must really find something to do. There were, it is true, some of Lookout and Hook's clerks who declared with much merriment at their evening smoking companies, that their governors, Lookout and Hook, had set boys to follow Mr. Pepper, and that they had found that he was regularly in the practice of carrying these tape-tied papers about the town for hours every day; and that they had dodged him, after parading some of the main streets, through the most obscure alleys and yards, till he reappeared in other great streets, without calling at a single door. They protested, too, that his coach journeys, and sometimes equally bustling departures in gigs, were of equal importance. They had traced him to an inn on the Burton road, where he had got down, professing to wait for another coach going across to Hinckley; and on another occasion had seen him impatiently inquiring for the house of some great landed proprietor, some five miles off, to which he had ostensibly set out to walk, but had been traced only to a rabbit warren, where he had pulled out of his pocket a paper of sandwiches and a little bottle of brandy, had regaled himself, whistled a tune, and then strolled back again in time for the afternoon coach, to which he hustled up as if he had been detained by momentous business, till he had but just been able to save the conveyance.

These might, it is true, be envious inventions;

one thing is certain, that for some time only the lowest and most simple class of clients were seen entering or issuing from the office of Mr. Screw Pepper. But in awhile he began to have a certain character for being a man of sharp practice, which means, according to common and unprofessional ideas, a man that sticks at nothing, but will undertake any job, however foul, and drag it through by any means. The local court, called the Peveril Court, for the recovery of small debts, soon saw him an active practitioner. Any one who wanted to compel some poor wretch, who had not enough to find bread for his children, to pay some paltry debt, perhaps not even a just one, or to see him turned from his wretched home and flung into a more wretched one, the low, dilapidated, and squalid building called the prison of this court, went to Mr. Screw Pepper, and was sure to have his thirst of vengeance satisfied, and was sure to have to pay smartly for it himself. Let us take a case of this description which was in these same screwing hands. The debt was thirty shillings. The writ and other documents were served, not on the debtor, but on his attorney, another man of like fame and practice.

The plaintiff, after the lapse of some eight or ten months, entering the office of Mr. Pepper to inquire into the progress of this cause, was received by him with the most obstreperous bursts of merriment.

“What is the matter?” asked the plaintiff. “Oh, capital! capital!” cried Mr. Pepper; “a most famous, capital joke!”—“Joke! what joke?” asked again the plaintiff. “Why,” replied Mr. Screw Pepper, still interrupted by fresh outbreaks of laughter, “we have sued the defendant, brought the cause to trial, won it, got a verdict, and then found that the defendant has

been dead and buried these six months! ha! ha! ha!" —"And do you think that a joke?"—"Oh, a capital joke, to sue, and get a verdict against a dead man! ha! ha! ha!—ha! ha! ha!"

The plaintiff, who began to feel that what was a joke to Mr. Screw Pepper, would be no joke to himself, upbraided Mr. Pepper for not taking better care to know whether the man were alive or not.

"Oh, I assure you, all is quite regular, quite regular. We served the documents on the defendant's attorney, and he always replied, 'All right! all right!'"—"But what effects had the man?"—"Oh, that is quite as full of fun. We got an execution against his goods, and sold up the widow, and have credited your account with the balance of the proceeds—one pound five shillings."

The plaintiff found, indeed, that it was no joke to him when Mr. Screw Pepper's bill appeared—it being exactly as many pounds as the sum sued for was shillings—namely—thirty.

But we are not to suppose that all Mr. Screw Pepper's exploits were of this costly kind to the client—costly they were, but so generally to the other unfortunate party, that he grew gradually into great request, even with persons of higher stand and pretensions. He was soon seen with a smart gig of his own, and a boy with a bit of yellow lace, or, as envious neighbours called it, bed-lace, round his hat, driving him, while a large blue-stuff bag was sure to be seen protruding out of the vehicle somewhere. He was a sedulous attender at the market on the farmers, as if he had much business amongst them. Here he was very jolly, jocose, smart, and talkative, and got the reputation of a prodigiously clever man, as sharp as a needle with two points. One instance of this

clever practice we may give, as it serves to show how he so rapidly ingratiated himself among the simple sons of the soil.

An old farmer, as Mr. Screw Pepper was talking with him in the corn-market, casting scowling looks at another not far off, observed, "Now, there's a fellow that you'd take by his looks to be as honest as the day, and yet let me tell you, there is not a greater scamp between here and London. That villain owes me forty pounds, and the wisest lawyer of you all cannot get it from him."—"Why not?" asked Mr. Screw Pepper, eyeing the man askance, "why not?"—"Why not?" replied the farmer, "because I have no evidence, that's why not. I sold him a horse for the money. Says he, 'Let's go in and take a pint of port on it.' In we goes, and then says he, 'I shall not pay you to-day, but this day next week at market.'—'Very well,' says I. But next market-day comes, and my gentleman says not a word about paying: so I ups to him, and jogging him on the elbow, says—'To-day—you recollect!'—'To-day? what of to-day?' says he, as innocent as a sucking pigeon; 'what of to-day?'—'Why, to-day you promised to pay for the horse!'—'Pay for the horse!' says he, as if all in astonishment; 'what?—why I paid you there and then!—did the wine get into your head so that you've forgotten that?' I was struck on my chest as if with a big stone. It knocked all the wind out of me, for I saw that the fellow meant gillery. Long and short—he stuck to it, and not a soul has been able t' extract a doit out of him."—"Phoh!" said Screw Pepper, "I'll get it for you."—"I'll tell thee what, man," said the old farmer, delighted; "if thou gets it, here's a ten pound note for thee—that's all I can say; but I think thou'll find thy match there.

Many a clever fellow has had a try at him." Mr. Screw Pepper disappeared, and, before the market was over, walking up to the old farmer, pulled out a roll of papers, and said, "Look at these—there's the money for you, however!" — "Burn me!" exclaimed the old farmer, seizing the notes; "why that never can be. How canst ta ha' done that?" — But it was so, and Mr. Screw Pepper declared nothing had been easier to manage. "I asked the man," said he, "to go and take part of a bottle of wine with me. In the course of conversation we grew merry together, when, poking the fellow in the side, I said, 'Commend me to you for a deep one! I've heard of the clever trick that you played off on Farmer so and so. Ha! ha! that beats me hollow. I could hardly believe the farmer such a fool!' — 'Oh,' said the fellow, 'he's fool enough for more than that. I could chouse him again as easy as this' — snapping his fingers. 'You really did it then?' said I, admiringly. 'It really was true? I never thought it more than a feigned joke!' — 'Did it? To be sure I did!' said the fellow, off his guard — 'and' — 'And you must pay the money!' said I, seriously, 'for I am his evidence, and will arrest you at once, if you do not.' That's all that passed — nothing in the world could be simpler."

This anecdote wonderfully spread the fame and extended the practice of Mr. Screw Pepper all through the country, and it was no longer necessary for him to walk round the town with tape-tied paper, or to take the coach to a distant rabbit-warren and seek practice by eating sandwiches, and whistling after them under the flowery gorse-bushes in May. He was a welcome and merry guest amongst the farmers on

Sundays, and his sharp practice became from year to year more widely diffused and known. He had long been the attorney of Ned Stocks and Peter Snape, and to him they now betook themselves.

Mr. Screw Pepper rubbed his hands as the prospect of this business opened upon him. Mr. Henry Flamstead and the estate of Dainsby Old Hall ! Never had such a goodly prize fallen into his net. Never did he expect such a splendid one from such clients as Ned Stocks and Peter Snape. When he had sounded the depths of the business, and had come to a full knowledge of the meeting of the creditors, of who they were, and of something like an idea of the extent of the claims on the estate, he was hardly able to contain himself, for he saw a most glorious field of legal enterprise, speculation, and peculation before him. He therefore assumed a very serious air, and told his worthy clients that it was a very serious business, and that they had done quite right in coming at once to him. From what they had informed him, he now informed them in return, by the aid of his superior knowledge, that not a moment was to be lost. If they had gone begging and praying for their money, dallying between Mr. Flamstead and that old fox, his lawyer, as Mr. Screw Pepper called him, the consequence would most likely have been that some of the greater creditors would have struck the docket against Flamstead ; he would then have been bankrupt, and amid the mass of heavier claimants they would have been thrust into the back-ground, and probably have come off, in the end, with Hobson's share, something less than nothing. But now, he hoped so at least, they were the first in the field—they would seize time by the forelock, and procuring

a statute of bankruptcy against their debtor, they would, instead of the last, be the first of creditors.

It would be impossible to describe the alternate terror and eagerness of the two men, as Mr. Screw Pepper thus harangued them. At one moment they were fit to die with fear lest some one else should get the start, and that they should have no weight in the matter; at another they fairly cried out, "Haste, haste, Mr. Pepper, haste, and get hold of the property."

Mr. Screw Pepper, indeed, let no grass grow under his feet. Mr. Henry Flamstead scarcely knew that this man of sharp practice was employed against him, when to his utter consternation and inexpressible surprise he found himself a declared bankrupt. Every exertion was made by his attorney to have this set aside, and the business arranged by a simple assignment to his creditors, and for the estate to be put in trust for them till the claims upon it were liquidated, and which, by a statement drawn up by him, showed could be readily done in at farthest seven years; but Mr. Screw Pepper was far too great a master of artifice for him. He represented the state of the times; the almost nominal value of the property in consequence, and the very heavy claims on this estate. Assignees were chosen to manage the business, and these were such as Mr. Pepper more particularly wished to work with. His representations to the main creditors were very different to those which he made to the Court of Bankruptcy. To these he declared that everything depended on management—that he had no fear that with the assignees appointed he should be able to pay to every creditor twenty shillings in the pound. These, relying on his well-known business powers, depended very much upon him, and the conduct of

the affair fell very much into the hands of himself and a small knot of creditors who were least likely to interfere with his proceedings, amongst whom were conspicuous Ned Stocks and Peter Snape.

CHAPTER VIII.

DARK DAYS.

THE thunderbolt of calamity had fallen on Dainsby Old Hall. The effects of it who shall describe? If we were to say the reader can imagine them—it is no use attempting to describe them—the reader might very probably imagine something very melancholy and very desolate, yet very different to the truth. If we do attempt to describe them we are not sure that we shall in any adequate degree succeed.

Who, indeed, could represent the gloom without and the death-like coldness within the hearts of those on whom this blasting bolt had fallen? This, so lately happy and joyous house, that so lately happy and united family. There was a silence not merely in the house, but in the very courts and gardens around it. The very cattle scarcely lowed; the very birds seemed to have been terrified, and ceased to sing. The dogs that used to meet the bounding steps of the young people with frantic leaps and barkings, now silently wagged their tails, gazed with a wistful, melancholy look into their faces, and followed them in silence.

As to the family itself, it seemed that not merely misfortune but sickness had fallen on them; and in such a violent shock how could one be separated from the other? The mother was really ill in bed, the daughters were weeping by her bedside; George was wandering uneasily from place to place, from field to

field, and Mr. Henry Flamstead sat for days in his chair more like a ghost than a living man, and heaving such sighs! The reproaches which he cast on himself were bitter beyond description. His fine old house and estate, so substantial, so sufficient, so clear, and free from touch of lawyer and creditor, and now assuredly to be torn in pieces, and from him and his for ever, by such wretches as Nea Stocks and Peter Snape, and Screw Pepper. The very thought of this was often too much for endurance. Henry Flamstead would rise up, stride hastily to and fro, strike his hand on his forehead, and cursing his ambitious speculations, drop down again into his seat with the perspiration streaming from his face, and with groans of the deepest misery. "What would his ancestors say to this, could they see it? What would his children be? Beggars, miserable beggars!"

But Mr. Screw Pepper did not leave Henry Flamstead too much time to agonise himself with these reflections. He soon appeared at the Hall, and professing deep regret at the necessity for this state of affairs, in a tone that was anything but regretful, apologised that his duty to his clients obliged him to put a person into the house to prevent any suspicion of anything being conveyed from the premises.

This fact itself was a bitter baptism to Mr. Flamstead. With his delicate and sensitive feelings, the very circumstance that a spy must be set over him and his family; that he was, in his own house, a suspected and watched personage, as if he were capable of committing petty frauds; that he was to be treated by such souls as Pepper, Stocks, and Snape, as if he were a Pepper, Stocks, or Snape—that was degradation, that was sufficiently galling and humiliating; but what was still more so, was the

man sent for the purpose of being watch and guardian of the creditors' interests.

This was a faithful tool and servant of Mr. Screw Pepper, one Gideon Spine.

Gideon was, like his master, one of a large class, whose abundance, however, is often denied by the wealthy and well-educated amongst readers, because it is not the happy and fortunate who are made aware of the existence of such men; the two classes walk through life in very different places. What, indeed, have the happy and fortunate, the educated and accomplished, the writers and the readers of poetry and romance, to do with parish-officers and constables? It is another class who are made only too well acquainted with the existence of this class of men—the poor, or those who are about to become so—the unfortunate. The happy and the rich ride through the world rather than walk through it. From gay and pleasant carriages they look down on the dusty pedestrian throng, and care little who they are—whether they be of the devouring or devoured class. What interest have they in the wearers of coarse linen and threadbare Yorkshire? What matters it whether it stretch across the broad back of a parish-officer, or the narrow one of a parish pauper—over the well-fed sides of a harpy of the law, or the lean members of him of whom he is in pursuit? But in the great throng itself, into what close yet unsavoury acquaintanceship are its living atoms crushed! How they look into each other's faces, and instinctively know the beak from the victim—the leech from the poor creature on which it is about ravenously to fasten! Then how numerous appears in the thronged highway of life the genus to which Gideon Spine belonged!

Gideon was now an old looking fellow of fifty. Whether he had starved himself, or sordid cares did the work of starvation, he had a lean, bony figure, and a wrinkled and cadaverous countenance. He was tall—had large hands and feet—wore a coarse long coat of duffle gray, with huge pockets behind, usually stuffed full of papers, and red old pocket-books, whose sides were bulged out with their contents. He walked with a tallish and stout oak sapling, and leaned forward considerably in his walk. He generally had a good deal of gray hair hanging about his shoulders, and left his gray whiskers long and lank. He had a thin and drawling voice, and a still and cold manner, that to no man's knowledge had ever been lit up by a smile.

Gideon Spine had, for upwards of twenty years, been well known all round that part of the country as a parish officer of a large country parish, or, rather, sometimes of one parish and sometimes of another. He was engaged on the avowed ground that there was no man who could do the parish business so cheaply as he could. Whoever, indeed, could extract anything from Gideon Spine, in the shape of parish relief, could certainly have found honey in a wasp's-nest. Gideon's soul had a hardness as of granite; and it was neither the heat of indignation, nor the tenderness of entreaty, that could make any impression upon it. He was quiet, of very few words, and immoveable. You might have said that he possessed an admirable patience and self-possession, if he had had any feeling that was excitable; but nobody could remember ever witnessing any feeling in him, except of a pale and deathly anger, when any of his prisoners attempted to escape from him, when he has been known to rise into the most ghastly and malignant

fury, in which he would kick, and throttle, and strike the offenders on the head with his heavy oak sapling, in a murderous rage.

There was no appearance in which Gideon Spine was more familiar to the people than that of riding in a cart through the villages, with a family of wretched orphan children, whom he was conveying to some distant factory, where he made a well-known trade of selling them at the usual price of five pounds a-piece, for such a term as should entitle them to a settlement, and prevent the parish which employed him ever being troubled with them again. It was by frequently meeting him at sessions, on parish business, and seeing the admirable qualifications that he possessed for a servant of the law—his perfect freedom from anything like the weaknesses which poets and such effeminate people try to dignify with the epithet humanity—his stoic-like firmness and adherence to the only legitimate object of gaining his end, without any regard to cries, entreaties, prayers, or any other ill-timed interruptions—that Mr. Screw Pepper was made ambitious to engage him in his service. He had succeeded; and this valuable servant had now been some years his trusty agent in many a delicate business. Since Spenser described his iron man, Talus, who went thrashing his way through the world with his iron flail, there never had been seen such a man as Gideon Spine.

The trusty Gideon was now installed at Dainsby as watch and guardian of the estate of the creditors. He had his bed in one of the garrets—he was not particular where—took his seat in the kitchen, and eat and drank there without word or remark, whenever any meal was set on the table. Only once did he deign to open his mouth during the three first

days that he was there, spite of all the keen things which the indignant servants, who hated both his presence and his office, addressed to him, or to one another. Once, on the third day, however, at dinner, as Gideon stretched out his own knife, and carved rudely from the piece of beef to which no one invited him, a maid servant said—"You make pretty free, master, at other people's tables!"—"Yes," replied Gideon, coolly; "but not at thine, or thy master's!"—"At whose, then?" asked the girl. "At the creditors'," rejoined Gideon, and pursued his meal in peace, regardless of all the sharp shots of wrath and ridicule that flew about his ears.

Gideon Spine's regular employment was to keep a sharp look out that nothing was carried off; his incidental labour was to make an inventory of all that the house, garden, farm-yard, and farm contained. In the pursuance of both these occupations, he was now in one place and now in another, and opened doors, peeped into the most private rooms, and even walked into them, without the least ceremony. He had a pace as stealthy as a cat, and you never were sure where he was. In the garden arbour, when they fancied him away in the fields or the woods, for he undertook to count all the trees, by some mode of arithmetic of his own, and to cast up the whole amount of their value; and when they had been freely dealing with both Gideon and his masters—a low cough would apprise them that he was behind the vegetable wall, and had heard everything. In the midst of some confidential talk on their own affairs in their most private rooms, Gideon would coolly walk in and stand and contemplate a wardrobe, a glass, or a chest of drawers, as if estimating their value; and they might just as well tell the

furniture itself to go away as Gideon. He was a continual goad—reminding them from hour to hour of the reality of their melancholy and mortifying circumstances.

We must pass rapidly over the years of still deepening sorrow and trial that awaited this unhappy family. I say *years*, for such was the fact. It was not Mr. Screw Pepper's intention to let the estate of Dainsby pass too rapidly through his fingers. In the repeated and rigid examinations to which Mr. Henry Flamstead was subjected, in that process of the rack and the harrow which is called making a full and complete surrender of all his effects to his creditors, it soon became known to the assignees that the important property of the Clockmaker was, failing any re-appearance of the said Clockmaker, Mr. Flamstead's. This raised the cupidity of Mr. Screw Pepper to the utmost extremity. As if the estate had not been, if fairly dealt with, far more than sufficient to satisfy all the claims of the creditors, he represented to them how desirable and how just it would be to obtain possession of this money. That obtained, they would all be paid at once, and the estate might remain intact to Mr. Flamstead. He advised, therefore, that no sale of the estate should take place till the attempt had been made to secure this money, but the rents merely be collected to defray the interest of the debt.

Mr. Screw Pepper having effected this arrangement, immediately hastened up to London, and exerted all his arts of legal eloquence and finesse, to induce the banking-house which held this money in hand to surrender it to the creditors, but in vain. He commenced a suit against them for the recovery of it, pleading the long disappearance, and, according

to all human calculation, absolute certainty of the decease of the Clockmaker, but with as little success ; the house stood on the clear and simple words of the trust, and the court confirmed their view of the matter.

Mr. Screw Pepper, baffled here, did not, however, abandon his endeavour to grasp this golden treasure. He tried to persuade Mr. Henry Flamstead to surrender his claim on the reversion, holding out as an inducement that it would facilitate the settlement of his affairs, and might prove the entire salvation of his estate. So satisfied was he, Mr. Screw Pepper said, of the certainty of this property falling to Mr. Flamstead, that if Mr. Flamstead would grant a conditional claim upon it to the creditors, he had but little hesitation in saying, that all might be brought at once to relinquish their demands of present payment, and leave their debts in full confidence upon this joint security.

But Mr. Flamstead, great as was the temptation to save his estate, entertained too deep a distrust of Mr. Screw Pepper to consent to any such arrangement. He affirmed that the security of the estate was itself ample enough for all that stood against it ; that nothing was more demonstrative of this than the fact, that, spite of all the law expenses thrown upon it, it still paid all the interest ; and that the minerals, still untouched, were worth twenty or thirty thousand pounds. He demanded that the statute of bankruptcy should be withdrawn, and protested that nothing but the most false representations kept him and his estate in the circumstances in which they were.

Mr. Screw Pepper affected to regard these remonstrances as so many unwarranted attacks on his professional advice and conduct, and became only the

more bitter and exacting. In fact he was most deeply disappointed in his hopes of establishing a claim on the Clockmaker's wealth, and determined to revenge himself on Mr. Flamstead for his firm resistance to his plans. He commenced, therefore, a system of persecution, by which he hoped finally to break Mr. Flamstead's stubborn will. He caused him to be again and again called before the assignees, and to undergo the most shamefully rigorous and inquisitorial cross-examination as to the full disclosure of all his effects. He even called upon him to surrender the watch he wore—the beautiful watch—the gift of his uncle, the Clockmaker, in his boyhood, and which was endeared to him by numberless pleasant memories. Mr. Flamstead, bowed down as he was by the load of cruel indignities and sorrows that had been piled upon him, yet pleaded hard and imploringly to be allowed to retain this, urging that it was well known that the estate was more than sufficient for all demands, and that it could not be just to deprive him of his personal possessions. But Mr. Screw Pepper denied that the estate was sufficient, and declared this watch to be of far more than the value which could be allowed to remain with a bankrupt. With the obedience of a child he surrendered this precious gift, and had afterwards the mortification to hear of Mr. Screw Pepper parading it in his pocket.

Bitter potions were now rapidly administered. It was declared time to offer the estate for sale. It was advertised, bills were printed, and the family were ordered to quit the house. It would be in vain to endeavour to depict the utter misery of this time. Where should the broken-hearted family go on quitting their old home,—the home of so many generations of their ancestors, the home of so many blissful days,—where should they

go? Mr. Flamstead proposed to remove to a small cottage in the village that belonged to the estate; to have so much plain furniture from the hall as would suffice, and to be allowed a certain sum for the maintenance of the family till the affairs were wound up, assured, as he stated, that there would be a handsome remainder for himself. But every one of these requests were peremptorily refused. He was told that all must be sold—the cottage, the furniture, everything, and that no maintenance could be allowed to him till it was ascertained whether there was any surplus or not.

The reception of this intelligence seemed to stun the whole family, and to lay them prostrate on the very earth. Utter ruin and starvation stared them in the face. Where should they go? What should they do? There was not a family in the village that they had a claim upon for shelter, and a temporary maintenance. They had not escaped in their misfortunes those usual accompaniments of calamity, which give to it its truest bitterness. Their own relations had heaped reproaches of extravagance, mismanagement, and foolish ambition upon them, without offering them any consolation, or an asylum. There were many circumstances common to falling fortunes, which we cannot enumerate here, that contributed to sink them into desolation and despair. Mr. Flamstead had suffered terribly in health and spirits; a deep and depressing melancholy had seized upon him, and he was heard frequently to say, “Oh if my uncle the Clockmaker were alive, I should not be in this condition—I should not want a friend.” His wife had sunk still more in health and spirits. The servants had been successively dismissed, and the elder sisters had at once to attend on their mother, and care for the younger children.

But there was one house and one heart that was open to the afflicted family, and they were those of the widow Westbrook.

Farmer Westbrook, we have seen, was the first to give a place of reception to the methodists. He had now been dead some years, but his widow had continued the farm, which belonged to a merchant of London, and had managed the affairs with admirable ability and success.

The Widow Westbrook was one of those women that an Englishman loves to describe. She was in one word a genuine Englishwoman. She was comely in form and face, high-minded, warm-hearted, clever-headed, discreet, and yet bold. She was what is called a woman on a large scale ; tall, portly, fresh, and active in carriage. She was not more than five-and-thirty, and had a handsome style of features, a fair ruddy complexion, and a voice and manner that made you feel at once that she was full of right sense and feeling, and would scorn a mean action, as she would despise the man who did one.

After her husband's death, people said it would be a difficult thing for her to keep on the farm. It was a large one, and required good and stirring management. "It would be a very awkward thing," said many, "for a woman to go to market and chaffer about corn and cattle amongst a crowd of rude men." Nay, so far did some carry it, that they were kind enough to apply to the landlord for the farm itself in case, as they expected, she would leave it. But Widow Westbrook declared that with God's help she had no thought of leaving it. Her husband had a lease, of which eighteen years still remained, and if she lived so long she hoped to be on the same spot when the lease expired. She soon showed that she was very

capable of managing her affairs. She put on stout ankle boots, and strode over her farm as boldly as any farmer. She went into fields even when ploughs were at work, stepped from furrow to furrow, and soon let the ploughman see that she had an eye to detect both what was well and ill done. In short, there was no farm that was better or more perfectly managed than hers. As to buying and selling, she had an upper labourer, an experienced and shrewd man, to whom she intrusted this business, after setting her own value on the cattle, and with success; and as it regarded her corn, there was a worthy miller who undertook to buy it at a time's price himself, or to dispose of it for her in the market, which he did to her high satisfaction. That miller was no other than Mick Shay. There were not wanting those who declared that Mick was over head and ears in love with the widow, and if it were so, it was no wonder. But Widow Westbrook had refused no less than five or six offers of marriage since her husband's death, and declared she would always remain single. Whether she had said nay to Mick Shay nobody could with truth tell; but everybody saw that Mick was regular in his calls there on his way to Derby market, and that they often talked a long time—a very long time over the yard-gate; but as everybody might hear, if they drew near, it was all about corn and cattle, hay and straw, and ducks and geese, and the like.

Mrs. Westbrook, after her husband's death, not only continued to carry on his farm, but carried on likewise his interest in the methodist society. She became a class-leader, and one of the most active, and judicious, and influential persons connected with the chapel. In this character she came much into the society of the Flamsteads, and a great mutual interest sprung

up between them. The clear and sound judgment of Mrs. Westbrook was most confidently relied on by Mr. and Mrs. Flamstead, and her energetic spirit often imparted its force to their more timid and languid movements. On the other hand, the thorough amiability and honesty of the Flamsteads greatly pleased Mrs. Westbrook. Strong characters are flattered by nothing so much as by seeing their plans and propositions followed out by their friends, and Mrs. Westbrook was always certain of having the support of the Flamsteads, if she once could convince them of the propriety of any object. The two elder daughters took the most affectionate fancy to her. To go round and see her superintend all the operations of butter and cheese-making; to gather vegetables and fruit for household purposes; to stroll with her through her orchard, and garden, and fields, and to learn, by watching and helping her, all the female acts of preserving, home-made-wine making, and so on, was not, though my fine-lady readers might think otherwise, in that simple country-place, inconsistent with the dignity of Squire Flamstead's daughters, even in their best days.

Mrs Westbrook took a lively interest in the attachment of Betsy to Robert Nadel, and many were the happy summer evenings in which these three took tea together in Mrs. Westbrook's arbour, and sat and talked on all that interested them in the little society of the place, their connections, hopes, and pleasures.

From the first moment that trouble reached the Flamsteads, Mrs. Westbrook had been the most zealous and sympathising of friends. Could she have roused Mr. Flamstead to the spirited measures which she recommended, and which she, in her own case, would certainly have adopted, it is very questionable

whether Mr. Screw Pepper would have been able to establish such a power over the estate, or have carried things with the high hand that he did. But when she warmly counselled him to such, he only shook his head, and said there were particulars that she did not know of.

The day for removal approached, and Mrs. Westbrook was the true friend in need. She came the moment she heard that this was imperative, and said that they must all come to her till something farther could be done. It was in vain that they represented that they should fill her house from bottom to top, and that they knew not if they should ever be able to make her a recompense.

“The recompense,” said Mrs. Westbrook, “is to come to me and let me feel that I can be of any use to my friends.”

On the day that they were to remove, she had arranged that they should come and dine with her. There should be no spectacle, no stir, no melancholy procession. Her covered spring-cart should go up to the hall, and in it, laid comfortably on a bed and cushions, Mrs. Flamstead, who was in the lowest state of debility, should be quietly conveyed to her house without anybody being the wiser. The children should make a *détour* and cross over the fields by a road well known to them, and avoid the village and the gaze of the villagers; and Betsy and Nancy should walk down direct to the farm, while Mr. Flamstead and George should drop in as if by chance. The cart should go again in the evening for their effects, and the whole transfer should be made with the greatest quietness.

Melancholy and wringing to the hearts of all as was this abandonment of the home of so many precious

days and recollections, and with the prospect of seeing it made over to strangers for ever ; yet, perhaps, no plan could so much lessen the force of their grief as this. They found themselves, without any formality of departure, all assembled, as they had often been before, round the hospitable board of Widow Westbrook, with the same comely and cordial face beaming welcome upon them as ever. But there was a weight and a consciousness of the reality which nothing could lift from their spirits. They were outcasts from their home and property ; the future was dark before them. They could do little more than sit and weep together. In the evening came their effects. These were in reality nothing more than their clothes and their private papers. Everything else, even small pieces of furniture and nick-nacks, the gifts of friends, were not permitted to be brought away—merely the trunks which contained what I have stated.

We may believe that it was a melancholy and a sleepless night to all except the children, who, with the light-heartedness of childhood, which is regardless of the strangest changes in life, so that food and rest and the sight of nature be left them, were all day delighted to run about the farm-yard and farm, and to watch the turkeys, the pigeons, and the people feeding and milking the cows, and at night dropped into their beds as peacefully as they had done in the brightest days at the hall.

CHAPTER IX.

FRIENDS IN NEED, AND PLANS IN NEED.

BUT if the night were melancholy, the morning was still more so. The whole elder portion of the

family held a solemn council with Mrs. Westbrook, as what was best to do for the future. Not to weigh on her kindness for more than a few days they were resolved. George declared that he had well considered what was best for him already, and that there was nothing which he found too humble for him which gave him any degree of present support. He held it for certain that in fifteen years the whole property of the Clockmaker would be theirs, and raise them above all necessity ; he did not despair but that something might yet be done to pluck the property out of the hands of the present unprincipled people who had possession of it ; but till then, it became them not to be a burden to their friends. In anticipation of this event, he had been to the agricultural implement maker, who used to work for him, but who was now master of a justly flourishing concern at Derby, and had engaged himself as clerk and superintendent in the occasional absence of the master, at a salary of four-and-twenty shillings a-week. As he was also to be allowed to do actual work after the regular hours of business, he had no doubt of his being able to gain his five-and-thirty shillings or two pounds a week, and he hoped to be able to share at least twenty shillings of it with his family. That, he knew, would be but little towards their actual necessities, to say nothing of comforts. Something further must be sought to assist ; none that could by respectable means obtain even a few shillings must neglect to do it, and if they only cured themselves of the false shame of resorting to labour, they should at least make an honourable conquest over false prejudices.

As George said this, his father gazed at him with a look of strange amaze. It was evident that nothing

so practical as this had ever entered his head during the whole course of his misfortunes. There was a singular contention of feelings in his bosom. He knew not whether more to admire George's energy wonder at his plans, or shrink from this humble track of usefulness that his son pointed out to him. But soon his own good sense, seconded by the cheerful outbreak of applauding voices from Mrs. Westbrook and his elder daughters, took the lead of all other feelings and sentiments, and he cried with Mrs. Westbrook, "Well done, George! that is brave. That is what we must all endeavour to imitate. It is no use now sinking into utter despondency. Those who have got the upper hand of us are not disposed to be very accommodating to us. Let us then not beg and sue to them. Let them not have the power to humiliate us. To work and maintain ourselves, watching for the return of a better day, is no degradation—it must be pleasing in the sight of God, and of every good man."

"Oh, Mr. Flamstead!" exclaimed Mrs. Westbrook, "how you rejoice me to hear you talk so. We will all see what is to be done. We will find out something, never fear, to make you all at least comfortable till, as you say, better days come—and depend upon it they will come. It is good for us to be tried; God knows that in his fatherly goodness, and if we are not the better for it, it is our own fault."

"Oh, what can *we* do?" exclaimed both Betsy and Nancy in one breath; "we will not be idle—we must, and will do something, but what; dear Mrs. Westbrook, help us to think what?"

"I have been thinking about it," replied Mrs. Westbrook, smiling; "and I think I have something already for you, Miss Betsy. I wish it were worthy of you—but we must, at first, get what we can."

Mrs. Westbrook then said that she had a friend in Derby, a milliner and mantua-maker in good business, and she had spoken to her of Betsy. She had told her what a beautiful needle-woman she was—what a fine taste she had in matters of dress; and her friend, who was a very good woman, would rejoice to have Miss Betsy's services for a time. She should, she said, sit in her own private room with herself and another young lady who was learning the business, to begin in a large way in a city in the West of England, a relative of her own; and though, perhaps, she should not be able to give Miss Flamstead much money just at first, till she got into all their ways, yet she could offer her a quiet home, with great privacy, and in a while, she did not doubt, a handsome remuneration."

Betsy agreed at once to accept this offer. She knew Mrs. Fernhead; she had often been at her shop; she was sure she would like her—and then she should be so near George.

"And me?" inquired Nancy, with tears and smiles in her eyes at once.

"Ah!" said Mrs. Westbrook, "you, dear little soul, must stay and be nurse and housekeeper to your dear parents. Oh, where can you be so happy and so useful? I shall keep little Edward, Jane, and Mary with me, and you will have the three others. You must have a cottage somewhere near here, and then we shall see one another. We shall often meet to cry a little, and to scold a little together, at the world and its worst folks. Oh, those good-for-nothing Screw Peppers, and Stocks, and Snapes, and Spines!—we'll be happy in spite of them! We'll, be happy in abusing them. Don't cry so now, Mrs. Flamstead—what's the use of it?"

Mrs. Flamstead lay crying on the sofa, and the tears of her daughters fell as fast as her own.

“What nonsense it is !” continued Mrs. Westbrook, stealthily wiping tears from her own eyes, “what nonsense it is, when all will soon be well again. I know it will. I am sure it will. Who knows what God has in store ? Who knows how he can and will confound all these poor, miserable, wretched people ? Oh, a day will come ! I feel as sure of it, as I am sure that that Screw Pepper is a double-dyed villain, and I shall see you all settled down again in that dear old house, just as if you had only been on a bit of a journey.”

Thus ran on the good, kind-hearted, buxom widow, with a voice that had a wonderful power of comfort in it ; and the afflicted family, now smiling, now weeping, began actually to feel as she spoke, as if such a day would one day come, and felt stronger and better. George and Betsy were impatient to enter on their new life ; and in a few days Mrs. Westbrook sent them off together in her gig, while she sent their trunks by the carrier, and the next day persuaded Mr. Flamstead himself to drive her over to see that all was comfortable.

Mr. Flamstead had a strange shrinking at the idea of finding his son George, the long-regarded heir of Dainsby Old Hall, at work at an agricultural implement maker’s, and his eldest daughter stitching away in a mantua-maker’s shop. But when he actually saw them, he was surprised to find how little the reality was like his fancy. George was seated in a very respectable counting-house, occupied at the books ; and in the ample warehouses of the ingenious mechanist was such a display of scientific and curious farming apparatus, as really deeply interested him.

Betsy was also seated comfortably in a small, but neat parlour, and was engaged with her needle on a fine piece of lace, just as she might have been at home. Both expressed themselves much satisfied, and were sure that they should be happy, if they could only know that those at home were so. Poor Henry Flamstead, humbled and stripped as he was, came home with a lighter heart.

Kind, and cordial, and cheering, as Mrs. Westbrook was, it was a depressing feeling to the sensitive mind of Mr. Flamstead, that there was he and his family, no less than nine persons, pressing heavily on the generous hospitality of the good widow; and he was anxious to get into a cottage of his own, however poor, though he really, as yet, could not tell where either the money to furnish it, or to furnish the table from day to day, was to come from. Mrs. Westbrook, though she threw no obstacle in his way, still said, "Pray, don't hurry, Mr. Flamstead, there is no occasion—let us see what may turn up in a while."

"What *can* turn up?" asked he despondingly.

"Ah, that I cannot tell. How can one tell all the plans which our good Father in Heaven has for us? But something will—you'll see something will—as sure as the sun is sent round the world every day to look after us all like a great shepherd, and to scatter cocks of hay and strengthening corn amongst us, God's human flock, as he goes."

Mrs. Westbrook smiled so sweetly and confidently as she said this, that Mr. Flamstead could not help looking at her with a sort of feeling that she had something more on her mind than she said—that one did not see into all *her* plans. Be that as it may, one evening, about a fortnight afterwards, Mick Shay came hastily into the Widow Westbrook's. The

widow had been all round the village all the afternoon with Mr. Flamstead, looking at cottages and rooms in houses to see what would best suit his family. So eager was he to get into one of them, as if Mrs. Westbrook's good table, flowing with the milk and honey of plenty, and ungrudging kindness, had in it something that quite made him in a hurry to get away from it—so he thought this—and then that, and then the other, would do excellently. To none of them, however, did Mrs. Westbrook seem very much inclined; one was too small, another too gloomy. They must really have something sunny, and with a sunny garden, though it was small, and the third was actually damp. Oh, they would get lumbago, rheumatism, consumption, there. "It's all in good time; don't you think so, Michael?" said Mrs. Westbrook, "all quite in good time yet."—"Did you ever gauge a boat, Mester?" asked Mick, without making any reply to the question of the widow.—"No, I never did," replied Henry Flamstead.—"But you could, no doubt, with a very little instruction. Lord bless me! it's the easiest thing in the world. You just poke a stick with marks ready made on it down the side of a boat, as it's on th' water—here and there—and then look at a little book wi' tables o' figures in it, and then you have an exact account of the weight o' coals or other goods i' th' boat."—"I have no doubt," replied Mr. Flamstead, "that I very soon could do that."—"Oh, for that matter, I could soon do it myself, though I never war much of a hand at reckoning," said Mick, "but if you think that just that easy sort of a thing would suit you—just till your own affairs take a turn—why, you see, I think you can have it."—"Can I?" demanded Mr. Flamstead eagerly, who saw a prospect of sup-

port open before him, just calculated for his not very hardy frame or turn of mind. "What is it, Michael? Is it on the canal—Oh, pray what is it?"—"It's just what you say," returned Michael, "I heard th' other day that th' clerk on th' Cromford Canal, at Coldnor Park, was going to leave—so says I, that's just the very thing for squire Flamstead, i' th' present distress. A more easy post—just to watch out of his house as the boats come, drop his stick into th' water, look at his book, say 'All's right,' and in again. A nice little house with the walls all covered with apricot and pear-trees. I've always admired how neat that house was, and what apricots and pears that man had—and there's a nice garden with a famous row of beehives—he'll leave the bee-hives to a sartainty—he'll never take the bees wi' him. It's just the thing, says I to myself, and no time's to be lost, 'faint heart never won fair lady,'" and here Michael glanced at the widow—"so I up and off to Mester Jessop o' Butterly. I know, says I, he's a man that has weight wi' th' proprietors, and he'll lean to a born gentleman, and a good gentleman, as sure as he is a gentleman himself. So I off, and gets speech of him, and blame me but he made th' blood fly out o' my heart into my heels!"—"How? Why?" inquired Widow Westbrook sharply.—"Why just by shaking his head. Thinks I it's all over—he's promised it to somebody or other before I knew—ding my buttons now! But he was not shaking his head about that after all. It was out o' regard to the squire's misfortunes—'Mick,' says he, 'I'm heartily glad that you're come as you are. Another hour and it had been too late; I am just going to the committee where there are forty applicants waiting; but I must have it for Mr. Flamstead

if I can—he's a worthy man, and that Lawyer Pepper is a d——d rascal; and I am grieved at my heart for Mr. Flamstead. But Michael,' continued he, 'you've your horse with you I reckon, so mount and away with me: there's no time like the present. You can wait a few minutes there, and you'll know the upshot of the business at once.' So off we went, and as we rode along he would have me tell him all about this bad business, and the goings on of this Screw Pepper. At which he shook his head again, and never said another word till we got to the Inn where the committee were sitting. But heaven help me! I could ha' cried, really I could, to see the crowd of poor, thin, down-looking men there were all anxiously waiting here about this place. They were evidently men that had suffered a deal. They had supped on sorrow, and breakfasted on nothing. And how they had brushed up their old threadbare coats, and put on the shirt that had the decentish collar and wristbands. Oh my! but those pale, thin faces, they couldn't brush up them, and when they saw me come, what a look they gave me, as if they saw another enemy. 'Mick,' said some of them that knew me, 'why sure thou art not a candidate?' 'Why not?' said I, for I did not know rightly what to say, 'why not? I dunna see why a man that can gauge a flour bag canna gauge a boat. I've been so long i' th' dust, I think it would do me no harm to be in th' water a bit.' Burn it! I wondered at myself for joking—'it's cruel,' said I to myself, 'it's worse than a bumbailiff;' but I didn't know what to say—I tell ye—because, yo see, I *was* in some sort a candidate. And then that poor ghastly smile that they gave at my joke. 'Nay, Mick,' said one of them, 'thou artn't after the place or thou

couldn't make merry about it.' 'Merry,' says I, 'Heaven knows I am anything but merry—so let's have something to drink.' I flung down half-a-crown—that instant comes a man with a pen behind his ear, looks and beckons to me; and when I gets out, 'There's that,' said he, 'with Mr. Jessop's compliments.' I looks at the paper, but my hand trembled, my head swam, I couldn't read a letter—it looked all like scrawls and crooked ss's; so I stuffed it into my pocket and rushed out of the house. My horse seemed as fond of going as myself; he set off wi' a whuh; and it was not till I got upon Coldnor common that I got down, tied him to a gorse-bush, and began to read.—'There's the paper—the place is yours!'

Who shall tell the joy and surprise that ran through all the assembled guests. There was more rejoicing, more tears of joy, spite of their pity for the forty disappointed candidates, over the unexpected gain of this little post, than if the whole wealth of the Clockmaker had dropped into Dainsby Hall in the days of its prosperity.

Those who had said that Michael Shaw was in love with the Widow Westbrook would now have said that the widow was perfectly enamoured of Michael; she looked as if she were actually going to embrace him, but she did no more than shake his hand cordially in both of hers, and exclaimed, "Michael! Michael! why, this *is* a feather in thy cap! Well, success to all honest millers for ever and ever, say I!"

"And Michael Shaw above all others!" exclaimed little Nancy, the tears starting from her eyes, nay, seeming to run all over her handkerchief which could neither stop them, nor the smiles which burst out like June sunshine from among them. Mr.

Flamstead shook Mick by the hand, but could not say a word ; and Mrs. Flamstead as she lay on the sofa quietly weeping to herself, with two or three children clinging about her, thanked him by her silence too. Mrs. Westbrook was, in the meantime, bustling about, and in came the tea-things. The whole party sate down and soon were in a perfect ocean of plans for furnishing and flitting, and everything. The Widow Westbrook was to go with Mr. Flamstead and Nancy the next day to buy furniture, which Mick Shay and Tom Fletcher claimed the right of fetching and putting into the house.

All the business of that buying and flitting, the looking over the little house and garden, how well-pleased the Flamsteads seemed with all, and what satisfaction they promised themselves in the humble premises, and how Mrs. Westbrook and Mick Shay came actually together the first day that all was completed, and drank tea with them, all this we must leave to the imagination of the reader. In a very few weeks everybody seemed settled into his or her place as if it had belonged to them for years. Henry Flamstead, although still to all appearance a melancholy man, performed his duty with attention and to the full satisfaction of the company. Nancy was as neat and thrifty a housekeeper as one could see anywhere. There were three of the younger children with them at home, where Nanc, instructed them when her work was done, and who played and weeded in the garden at other times. Mrs. Flamstead was really better as if with the very change of air. The other three children were with Mrs. Westbrook, and every Sunday the whole family, by the good widow's peremptory order, met at her house, went to the chapel together, and spent the day in much

quiet satisfaction ; George and Betsy excepted, who, however, were generally with them once a month, and George who was a good walker much oftener.

Though we are not to suppose that former days, that Dainsby Old Hall, or the state of the family property and affairs were ever out of their minds, or that they could be perfectly happy under such circumstances, yet they were not the less thankful to a good Providence for so good, though humble a position as they had found for the present. Their real religious feeling was only the more deepened by their misfortunes, and they could now more forcibly bless God for the benefits they enjoyed than they could formerly for the most abundant flow of their good fortune.

It was true that the active Screw Pepper was busy with legal chicanery with the Dainsby estate, and, as was said by the knowing head-shakers, drawing the very marrow out of it for himself. It was true that his creature, Gideon Spine, with his vulgar dowdy wife and children, was located in the hall, and was duly seen going round with his book from farm to farm, cottage to cottage, collecting rents and arrears of rents. It was true that with fortune's smiles, many another smile had vanished from once friendly faces, but yet there was a support and a haven for the present, and good hope for the future.

"Were but my uncle the Clockmaker alive, how soon all would be right!" still sighed Henry Flamstead; yet he was always reminded that if he were not here himself, his wealth would ere long be theirs, and set all in order again.

Through all, Mrs. Westbrook was the steady, animating, and counselling friend. She was not content even to be that—she broke forth in no sparing terms on all and every one who seemed to forget in

the present conditions of the Flamsteads, the friendship and favour of the past times. One instance of this I must not omit,

Dainsby Old Hall had always been the welcome and cheering home, and resort of the methodist ministers who came to preach at the chapel. But when misfortune fell on the Flamsteads, the place of entertainment became the house of Mrs. Westbrook. She soon began to notice that some of these preachers seemed to come and go and make little inquiry after their old friends and entertainers. She was inwardly piqued, but for some time she said nothing except to herself, which was this, "So, they have forgotten the roof that covered them; the table that was spread for them; the hand that fed them and welcomed them. Now, that which is *their* case would be *mine* also. Oho, youngsters! but I shall take you to task though!"

These preachers were, it must be understood, chiefly young men, who were called local, or occasional preachers, that is, preachers who were in a process of initiation for the regular ministry, or who were a kind of amateur preachers in their own neighbourhood; men in business who had not any ultimate ideas of being anything more. These preachers are generally sent into the country, especially those who are making their first essays, and thus, while acquiring, by practice, confidence and experience themselves, serve to relieve the labours of the Regular or Round Preachers, so called because they go certain rounds in a fixed district. Many of these young men were, as the greater number of the Methodist preachers of that time were, persons of very little education, nailers, potters, framesmiths, and such like from Belper, and such manufacturing places. There were truly many things which they

had to learn, and Mrs. Westbrook did not fail to do her best to enlighten them on many points, and now especially on this. "How is it," she asked, "that you do not go to the Hall now?"—"Oh, it is in the hands of the creditors; we could not do that."—"True, not to eat and drink, or to sleep—but you could at least go, and ask Mr. and Mrs. Flamstead how they do."—"Oh, we've done that at the chapel."—"Well, that's something, to be sure; but I should like you much better, let me tell you, if you went and did the same at the Hall. It used to be no trouble to go there." When the Flamsteads had left the Hall, and were located, as we have just seen, "Well," Mrs. Westbrook would ask of one or another of them, "do you ever, in your rounds, look in at the Flamsteads? Do you ever see Miss Flamstead, or Mr. George, at Derby?"

The answers to these questions did not altogether please her. They had not been lately at Derby; they had not been either at Mr. Flamstead's lately; they were so driven for time to go to the places where they had to preach, on Sundays and other evenings; that they were often pinched for time, and so on."

"My youngsters," thought Mrs. Westbrook, "I must cure you of this coldness towards old friends under a cloud. That is not the way that I want to see religion taught."

There was about to be a great preaching and collection on the anniversary of the opening of the chapel. The liberal contribution of Mr. Flamstead being necessarily withdrawn, made a zealous effort for the chapel funds imperative. Mrs. Westbrook exerted herself for this purpose; and the most distinguished man of the whole society, at that time, the Rev. Jabez Bunting, was prevailed upon to come

down to preach the anniversary sermon. That circumstance was in itself success. People flocked at the news from the whole country round. The chapel was crowded to excess ; and amongst the rest were seen almost every preacher of the vicinity. The Flamsteads were all in their old seat ; not with the air of gay prosperity as formerly, but with a sad, subdued, and yet grateful expression of feature and bearing. The preacher spoke especially of the changeableness of fortune, of the deceitfulness of riches—and of that deceitfulness being often made by Providence, a means of discovering the deceitfulness of the world. He drew various pictures in which people of the world dealt deceitfully “as a summer brook, that by reason of drought passeth away,”—and he said, that Christ, *our* teacher and example, had declared, “It shall not be so among my disciples.” “By this shall all men know, that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another.” He then declared how earnestly he longed that the society, and especially their ministers, would seize on and maintain that glorious mark of Christian membership and Christian contrast to the world. That they should, great and small, rich and poor, be bound together in a bond of union stronger than all the ruling powers of the world, and triumphant over all its guile. On his brethren of the ministry did he particularly call to maintain the great and godlike testimony of Divine love. “I have sometimes heard with regret,” said he, “my brethren of the ministry say, ‘we fear to call too much on such and such, in his present circumstances, lest we should be burdensome’—but, oh, my brethren, what burden is so heavy and crushing as the burden of unkindness and neglect !”

If any one had watched the countenance of Mrs

Westbrook, while the preacher was in reality dealing these hard blows that were felt in all their weight in certain bosoms, they would have seen a singular expression of satisfaction and humour in her eyes and about her mouth, which at length vanished in a deep and tender emotion.

The moment the service was over, Jabez Bunting descended the steps of the pulpit, and, going into the seat of the Flamsteads, shook them all, with the most cordial kindness, by the hands; and, after he had shook hands also and greeted many others of the congregation, he gave one arm to Mr. Flamstead, and the other to his wife, and walked on with them to Mrs. Westbrook's, where a large company of the congregation dined together. From that day Mrs. Westbrook had no longer any need to lecture the young preachers on recollecting our friends in trouble.

CHAPTER X.

THE LAST DROP TO THE FULL CUP.

THE fury of the tempest of misfortune seemed to have spent itself on the Flamsteads. They had found a humble but secure shelter from it, and each discharging the duties of his new position, awaited in patient resignation the better unfoldings of the future. But that future was not to arrive without a deeper baptism.

"Where is Robert Nadell?" it began to be frequently asked by one and another of the Flamsteads. "I have not seen him lately; I do not see him so often as formerly!"

"Where is Robert Nadell?" I have no doubt that many a young reader has already asked. And I

wish, with the Flamsteads, that I could give a good account of this young man.

In the first outbreak of their trouble he had been most generous and sympathising, most kind. He was always with them trying to cheer them up; assuring them that things would turn out better than they imagined. He had entreated his father to come forward and assist Mr. Flamstead with money and advice, and when he found it vain, no one had so deeply regretted it as himself. He spoke warmly and indignantly of the coldness and selfishness of the world. He was always with George, managing such affairs as Mr. Flamstead was prevented from attending to by the pressing circumstances in which he was suddenly placed. He read to Mrs. Flamstead, and was, to all the young children, like the best of brothers. The whole family was charmed by his truth and affections. Betsy was prouder than ever of her choice, and Nancy was most eloquent in his praise. Mrs. Westbrook often said to him, "Mr. Nadell, you have acted like a man! You know not how much I admire you—but only hold on!"

"Why do you always say 'hold on?'" asked Nancy quite affronted, "do you think that Robert would change? Has any one behaved more nobly, more like a true friend than he?"

"That is just what I say," Mrs. Westbrook repeatedly replied to Nancy, "I admire Robert Nadell's behaviour so much that I am jealous lest he should ever change."

"Change! how you do talk, dear Mrs. Westbrook," repeated Nancy, "I cannot tell you how disagreeable your words sound to me—for Heaven's sake never say so again!"

But many months were not passed before poor

Nancy thought often on Mrs. Westbrook's words, and felt a still colder feeling accompany the memory of them than had attended their utterance. Robert Nadell certainly did not come to see them so often. True, Betsy was at Derby; George was there, and there, of course, Robert would go. They had nothing to amuse him at their poor house, no fields, no woods, no shooting, no fishing, no George, and above all, no Betsy—why should he come then so much?

But unfortunately George, when he came home, began also to ask the same questions. "Where is Robert Nadell now-a-days?"

These questions were often followed by a strange silence. It was true that Robert still did come to Coldnor—still did go to Derby, and on such occasions was most kind, most friendly. But somehow George found and Nancy found that there was not the same transparency of character—the openness of mind about him. He did not talk so much of his hopes, his views, his plans. Betsy made no such inquiries; "and," said Nancy, "surely if Robert did not show the same warmth of attachment, the same zeal as formerly, she would. She would tell *me*; *we* have never had any secrets and obscurities between us!" Then again fell the strange words of Mrs. Westbrook on Nancy's mind, and she resolved to write to Betsy and put some searching questions to her. She did so and Betsy wrote back immediately, "Oh no! Robert was not cold, not changed! He was still as kind, as true as ever; but he was in trouble. His father was, as was quite in keeping with his worldly character, now quite opposed to the match. He had been very severe upon Robert regarding it. Robert had communicated all his troubles to her, and she

had offered to set him at liberty, cost what it would, rather than be the cause of family disunion between father and son. Besides," said she, "she was proud; she was a Flamstead, and if she were not to have a penny, would not enter a family that thought itself disgraced by her."

This letter filled Nancy with indescribable trouble. She was hurt that Robert, who was young enough to wait, ay, even for ten years, should not quietly let his father's opposition blow over, without troubling poor Betsy with it, while she was away from her family. She, too, was proud, and said indignantly, "What! is not Betsy Flamstead good enough for that miserly curmudgeon? Oh, I wish it were but me! I would soon let the old gentleman see *that*, if my heart would break for it; I would refuse the finest lord in the land, if he would not prefer me to the Queen herself! But, alas for poor Betsy! Oh! shall she be miserable!—shall she be despised! It is a shame—I cannot bear it. I will away to Betsy. I will see Robert, and talk to him—that I will."

Nancy was, in fact, soon over at Derby; and soon sent for Robert from his father's house. She was, as was inseparable from her nature, warm, indignant, vehement, and full of trouble. She told him that she had advised her sister to give him up, if he showed the least coolness, the slightest unworthiness. She was too proud of her sister to wish to see her allowing any one to hold her, except on the terms of that pride which any honourable man would feel in her attachment. She wept impetuously, and then declared that if she could believe Robert Nadell anything but the true and noble gentleman, he had ever showed himself, that was the last word she would ever speak to him.

The consequence of all this scene was, that Robert Nadell protested, and that with tears, that never had he been more entirely attached to Betsy Flamstead ; and never had he been more proud of her than in her present situation ; never for a moment had he entertained any thought but that of the profoundest pride in her, and affection for her. Nancy shed a fresh flood of tears, then lighted up as rapidly into radiant smiles, and Robert departed, leaving behind him an impression of the most unbroken truth.

But let us take a peep at his reception by his father the same evening, as he entered to supper. The father was a stout, gentlemanly man, who had spent many years in the army, and still bore the name of Captain Nadell. He was a rosy-complexioned, cheerful, and good-natured man, according to common opinion. A very fluent man in company : a man who had seen a deal, and heard a deal of the world. He knew, indeed, so much of the world, that he had no idea of his son's marrying, except so as to ensure a good portion of its favour. So long as the Flamsteads were the Flamsteads of Dainsby Old Hall, it was all very well. He never asked the reason of his son's going there so much—it was quite natural. George and he were inseparable cronies ; and, besides, there were the Miss Flamsteads, very charming girls—no harm could happen there. When Robert used to return from Dainsby, his father used to joke him pleasantly, and ask him how the Miss Flamsteads were, and especially Miss Flamstead, but that was all. He never told his son that he fancied Miss Flamstead had particular attractions for him, or that it would be agreeable to himself to see such an alliance. When others rallied him on Robert being so much at Dainsby, he took it all very smil-

ingly; "Young people," he said, "would flock together—it was all very natural." That was all the perspicacity that Captain Nadell gave to his wishes.

But now, since the fall of the Flamsteads, it was with a very different greeting that Robert was received from his visits to them. "Well, Bob, where have you been?—not to the Flamsteads again, I hope. You surely are not so green as that. You have no idea, I suppose, of marrying into a ruined family. Of course, you know that to marry one of such a family, is to marry all—a pretty marriage settlement, indeed. Let me just tell you, Bob, it is easier to get into a trap than to get out of it. But if you get into a marrying trap, with a needy woman, there are just four ways of getting out of it: first, by undergoing a good horse-whipping; secondly, by having a bullet put through your head; thirdly, by paying a good sum of money; and fourthly, and lastly, by marrying, which, in such a case, is by far the worst alternative of all."

To this exposition of parental and practical wisdom, Robert ventured to say something about old friends; of the meanness of deserting such in trouble; of the great expectations of the Flamsteads still. To which his father only replied, with a knowing smile, "That a green goose was reckoned a very good sort of thing, but that such a green goose as a young man stuffed with all these old-world and romantic notions, he never wished to see at his table. To be plain," concluded he, "do just as you please, Bob; marry a mantua-maker if you like, but don't expect that one penny of my money will be bestowed on such an ass!"

Such was the lecture which was bestowed on Robert Nadell on that evening after his affecting interview with Miss Nancy, and which was, with much other banter, often repeated to him. But this was not

all; the cunning father understood military tactics well enough, to turn many another battery of social ridicule upon his sentimental son, in the circle of their friends. He sent him to make a tour amongst his numerous relations in different parts of the kingdom, and earnestly desired, by private letters, that Robert should be exposed to the most dangerous assaults from the ranks of beauty, wit, wealth, and accomplishments.

Shall we confess that this succeeded? Shall we add another to the list of faithless lovers? The fact is stronger than our inclination, and we are forced to say that Robert Nadell, to use the mildest term, was a weak young man. He was like a thousand others, who mean well, exceedingly well; who would never fall if they were never tempted; who would even go right and act nobly, if they were always surrounded by the good and the generous; but who are too weak of nature or of purpose to resist the influence of those about them. Before that summer was over, Betsy Flamstead, in reply to a letter to Robert Nadell, complaining of never hearing from him, received one from him, dated from the north of England, expressing all his old affection, but confessing that such was the opposition of his father and friends, that he saw nothing but ruin for them both in such a union, and therefore, with the persuasion that he should never be happy again, he thought it was better that they should for ever abandon their long-cherished hopes.

Sick at heart as poor Betsy Flamstead was, she nevertheless wrote a letter in reply, overflowing with the most generous sentiments, and bidding her lover, with her warmest blessing, be as free as the winds; and within a month received the certain intelligence that Robert Nadell was about to be married to a

wealthy heiress, of whose beauty and wit fame spoke in most eulogistic terms.

The poor girl had buried in her bleeding bosom the dissolution of her engagement with her faithless lover; and now the news of his perfidy came to her, mingled with indignant upbraidings of him, from her own family, and especially from Nancy. Fain would she have defended him to her own heart and to them, but it was in vain. His conduct had been cruel beyond words, and she brooded on it over her daily work, and laboured on with a feeling that could not long endure. It was not many weeks before Mrs. Westbrook was informed by her friend, Mrs. Fernhead, that something was sadly amiss with Miss Flamstead; there was some heavy trouble on her mind, she was sure, and she really was not fit for her daily business. Mrs. Westbrook only too well divined the cause. She hastened to Derby, and was shocked to see the change in poor Betsy. She took her home with her immediately, and tried to comfort and amuse her, but Betsy begged to be allowed to go to her own home, to her parents and sisters, where she still rapidly faded away under the most fatal species of consumption—that of the heart. Poverty and daily labour she had borne like a heroine—borne it bravely, cheerfully; but to feel that she was despised, deserted, for her poverty, by him on whom her heart rested as on her faith, stung her to the very heart's core—was like the rude hand which breaks the green corn-stalks, so that nothing can ever raise them again.

The home of the Flamsteads was now truly a home of desolation. All former troubles became forgotten in this cruel sin against one of the gentlest spirits that ever appeared on the earth. This admirable daughter and sister, who had surrendered all her bright pro-

spects almost without a sigh, who had submitted to daily labour as if she had been born to it, to lift off, as much as possible, the burden of care from her parents—to be thus rudely snatched away from life, for that was too evident, by one who had so well-known her, and all her love for him—it was bitter beyond words.

George vowed the most deadly vengeance. It was in vain that Nancy, whose quick resentment had tended in no small degree to inflame his, now terrified at the effect of her words, implored him not to do anything which might increase the affliction of the family. It was in vain that father, mother, and even Betsy, to whom suspicion of George's intentions somehow made their way, endeavoured to lay him under a promise not to meet Robert Nadell in any manner—it was well-known that he wrote to him, sought to get to his presence, and heaped all sorts of insults on him; to which he received only for answer, that Mr. Robert Nadell would on no account go out with him. He acknowledged that he had given him and his family sufficient cause of resentment against him; and he would not enter into any arrangement that might endanger his adding the most fatal increase to the sorrow he had already occasioned them.

These circumstances, however, tended to aggravate in no small degree the misery of the Flamsteads. From day to day Betsy visibly declined, and the fears which haunted the whole house of some dreadful affray between the two young men, hung like a thunder-cloud ready to burst upon the devoted family with more mischief. At length, in the last stage of failing strength, Betsy seized her brother's hand as he one day sate by her bed-side, and prayed him, as he valued her love, and would wish to cherish her

memory in peace and with a calm conscience, that he would promise for her final peace, promise for her sake, and for the sake of those religious principles in which they had all been brought up, and with which all her hope of happiness and of re-union was bound up, to renounce his vows of vengeance. The scene, the place were too solemn and sacred in their claims to be withstood. The sister who had been his companion in childhood, who had grown up with him as a shape, of joy and generous affection, now lay before him pale as the lily of spring, angelic as that heaven to which she was speedily to be summoned ; and he, bent down with a passion of tears, vowed to fulfil her desires, ay, under all circumstances, be they what they might.

That very evening, as George strode back with a sad heart towards Derby, in a deep, hollow way on a solitary moor, he met suddenly, and face to face, Robert Nadell. The two young men paused and looked into each other's face. There was a deep silence—both were pale as death. At length Robert Nadell said, "I am unarmed—if you mean to fulfil your vows, I tell you once more I will not strike you!" There came another vow, like a lightning flash, across the mind of George: "You have already done enough!" he said in a deep voice, and strode on his way.

But these two young men were doomed to meet once more, and under still more striking circumstances.

It was not many days before the bell at Dainsby Church tolled for the passing soul of a maiden of twenty-two—they were the years of Betsy Flamstead, and every villager said at once, "She is gone!" They were right: and a week afterwards the bell was tolling

again to call her to her grave, to take her place beside her ancestors who had gone down to the dust, most of them in age, and with hearts that had slumbered as it were, along the path of life—not like her been cut down in her bloom by the sickle of unkindness.

With the simplicity of the place the funeral train went over hill and dale pursuing a narrow bridle-road that led more directly, and, indeed, with less observation to her native village. Far as they had had to come, her coffin was borne on men's shoulders, and three sets of bearers relieved each other. They went on to the singing of a psalm, and there was something deeply affecting as over the brown heath, and along the wood-side, now brilliant with the hues of autumn, that long sable train was seen by the solitary farmer in his fields, moving in the stillness of that retired region, and the mournful cadence of the psalm fell distantly on his ear.

But the funeral train had now reached a long narrow wood that filled up a deep valley between hilly fields. It had descended into this glen, that went by the name of Egriff Dingle, and the bearers of the coffin were just about to issue forth on the other side into the open fields, when a horseman came at a rapid trot round a bushy knoll and halted close to the gate, which was held open by a tall man who stood with his back to the horseman. The rider with the universal feeling of reverence, on such occasions in the country, instantly took off his hat, and sat on his horse bare-headed. But what was the astonishment of the pall-bearers as they glanced at him and saw that he was—Robert Nadell.

He was pale as death itself—there was an expression of astonishment and even horror in his countenance that could not be mistaken. It was evident that

this was no premeditated encounter—it was at once unexpected by him and astounding. It seemed as if horse and man were fixed to the spot. The black procession came up the steep ascent out of the glen, every figure stooping, as men do who climb a steep path, and every one, on reaching the gate, looking up and glaring with surprise on the horseman.

It would require the pen of an archangel to describe all that was expressed and felt by every one of those successive gazers. Who shall describe the effect of the quick, momentary glance of George Flamstead, of the woe-stricken paleness and meek sorrow of the father? If a file of deadly enemies, each armed with a loaded musket, had issued from the glen and fixed their eyes on Robert Nadell, it would have been nothing to the horror which then seized him. Years of conflicting agonies withered him up, as the glances of these injured beings fell upon him. He felt that scorn, contempt, and hatred were but a faint portion of the feelings that overwhelmed him. His heart, his life, his conscience seemed to him laid bare to the eyes of every one that passed, and that every one in succession pronounced his eternal doom. If the earth would have opened its mouth and swallowed him up, he would have blessed it. But the procession went on; the psalm again sounded its mournful melody, and there sate the tall horseman as if turned to stone.

The tall man was about to close the gate when he too became aware of the horseman. The man was Michael Shaw. He gazed at the figure of horror for a moment, and then said solemnly—"Robert Nadell, come on, the way is open. She whom thou hast murdered is going to her rest—but here is thy way—into the world to which thou belongest. Come on, Robert Nadell; and, dreadful as is this righteous

judgment, believe that God wills not thy utter destruction. His hand it is plainly that has led thee up here at this moment, for I feel sure that thou wouldst of thy own will have been far enough off to-day : and when that hand lies heavy on thee, as it will for years, day and night, summer and winter, in the field and in the city-street, let it have its way even when thou groanest under it, for it surely means to punish only to be merciful, or it would have left thee to the last and the long reckoning ! Go, Robert Nadell, and if it can, peace go with thee ; but when wilt thou have a peace like yon sleeping maiden ? ”

With a sudden glance at the speaker, as of a madman's, Robert Nadell struck his spurs into the flanks of his steed, and the animal snorting, dashed down the glen, and Michael Shaw, pausing a moment, watched him gallop onwards, till a sudden sweep hid him from the view.

CHAPTER XI.

JOHN FOX AGAIN.

IT was at this crisis that Mr. John Fox arrived at Leniscar. The winter had passed over since the events which we last related. The Flamsteads in their little cottage were living still and retired, and bearing with resignation all the trials with which a wise Providence had seen meet to visit them. The turf had grown green on Betsy Flamstead's grave, and the violets, which loving hands had planted there, filled the air with their fragrance ; and the yet unsoiled garland of white flowers, as was the village custom, swung from the chancel-roof above the pew of the Flamsteads, commemorating her early death.

Old Gideon Spine was still established at Dainsby Old Hall, with his wife and family, appearing in that quiet house as much in place as so many owls or jack-daws or rats that had got in since it was deserted. Gideon held no communication with the inhabitants of the village, except regularly every Monday morning to call at the cottages for the week's rent. He seemed to grow every day more and more surly and crabbed, and had already heaped upon himself a pretty good share of the people's hatred, about which, however, he appeared very little to concern himself. In the meantime, his master, Mr. Screw Pepper, had been busy with the estate, but had brought affairs as little apparently towards a termination as when he first got them into his hands. There had been no less than five years expended on the settlement of the bankrupt's concerns: there had been no less than seven sales advertised of the property, in one form and another, all of which had come to nothing. In one case, there was the confident prospect pleaded, of a sale by private contract, and, therefore, the public sale was postponed. In another instance, it was declared that the property was actually disposed of by private contract; yet in a while it was again made known that the purchaser had, after signing the agreement, run off from his bargain on some dissatisfaction or other; there had been legal process resorted to, to compel the completion of his purchase, but it had not succeeded. The rest of the sales did not obtain a bid equal to the valuation, and therefore the property had been bought in for the court by some one appointed for the purpose, on the plea that it would be unjust to the claims of the creditors to let the estate go on these terms.

All this, people saw very well, was making dread-

ful havoc with the property, by heaping a monstrous load of legal charge and other expenses upon it. In the meantime Mr. Screw Pepper seemed to flourish wonderfully. He had removed into a larger house, drove a handsomer carriage, with a full-sized and full-liveried servant, and was become much more lofty and consequential in his bearing.

It seemed to be extremely unpleasant to him that Mr. Flamstead had obtained the humble employment that he had. He determined to annoy him to the utmost. He declared that a bankrupt, whose affairs were not settled, could not have a house well-furnished without being called upon to account for the possession of so much property, and accordingly he did call upon him for such an explanation. Mr. Flamstead appeared before the commissioners with the utmost composure, and showed with the most cool and perfect candour that every piece of furniture which stood in his house was a generous loan of the Widow Westbrook. This was a poser for Mr. Screw Pepper ; but it only seemed to fill him with a more bitter spirit. He demanded an account of Mr. Flamstead's salary, which, besides the house, was one pound a week ; and he declared that he considered this too much for a bankrupt, whose effects were of such trivial value that they were actually unsaleable, and that it was but fitting that he paid seven shillings per week to the account of the creditors. The pitifulness of this demand was too much for even the most sordid assignees, with the exception of Stocks and Snape, who thought it a burning shame that a man who owed so much money as Mr. Flamstead did, should be living in so much luxury ; these worthy fellows, by-the-by, being annually in full receipt of interest of the whole of their debt on the estate.

Mr. Screw Pepper was not, in the meantime, beaten from his purpose of petty annoyance of a man whom he saw so thoroughly despised him, and whom he knew he was so deeply robbing and injuring. He stated to the assignees that Mr. Flamstead was not only in the receipt of one pound a week, clear of all reduction, but that he had every reason to believe that he had the assistance of friends and children. The children he had out at constant employment, who, as they were single persons, no doubt could and would confer part of their gains on their father. He called on Mr. Flamstead to make a full disclosure, on oath, of all such receipts. Mr. Flamstead declared himself perfectly willing to do so; but this was warmly opposed by the assignees, except the two notorious ones, Stocks and Snape, who were as greedy for this disclosure as if they were losing the whole interest, and were sure to lose the whole principal also. But Mr. Screw Pepper had not yet done; there was the old subject of the Clockmaker's wealth. He contended that, as the property was actually unsaleable, it was absolutely necessary that Mr. Flamstead should make over his reversionary claim on this property, and in this demand he was strongly supported by the assignees. But Mr. Flamstead as steadily refused. He declared, whatever might be said of the unsaleableness of the estate, he knew very well that it was worth far more than their demands upon it. He called upon the assignees to answer honestly whether every creditor was not annually and duly paid the interest on his debt; and he demanded that he should be put into possession of his own property, out of which he had been so unjustly driven; and that he would engage to pay every man his own. He said that now it was very

different to what it was when the war had just ceased. The corn-bill had now taken effect, and a high value was again given to landed produce; and that, if the estate were fairly brought to the hammer, it would not only sell for as much as it owed, but would leave a handsome surplus. Then there were the minerals—he had been told by Mr. Screw Pepper that they were of very little value—that no one would offer more than the merest trifle for them; and that while they found it impossible, when they were offered with the land, to obtain a bidding equal to the amount for the whole, on the other hand, when they reserved the minerals for separate sale, no one would bid at all for the land, declaring, very naturally, that the value of the land would be in great measure destroyed, if the proprietors of the minerals could come at any time and delve and turn it all up, topsy-turvy.

“Yet, notwithstanding this statement,” said Mr. Flamstead, “I have heard, from good authority, that Mr. Pepper now offers the minerals by private contract, at a price equal to that of the estate itself; in fact, at such an extravagant price as totally prevented their sale.” He ended by calling upon Mr. Pepper to answer, before the assignees, to this charge.

On this, Mr. Screw Pepper turned red, pale-yellow, and then broke forth into the most vehement denials of the truth of these abominable attacks, as he called them, on his character, heaping on Mr. Flamstead the most opprobrious terms.

The assignees were compelled to interfere, but Mr. Flamstead coolly and steadily adhered to his point, and offered to bring forward respectable evidence of what he asserted. Adding, moreover, that as it regarded the property of the Clockmaker, that even were the estate deficient, which he altogether denied,

he never would consent to convey away that which was not his own, which indeed might still be the property of a living man, and which might never become his, but his children's, who had no concern whatever with their father's management of his estate, nor were responsible for his deficiencies, nor called upon by law or justice to make good, out of funds furnished to them by a totally different person, the waste or imprudence of their parent. It was quite enough that they would derive nothing from that parent.

This spirited conduct of Mr. Flamstead, and the true character which he had dared to give of the proceedings of Screw Pepper, did not fail to fill that personage with the most diabolical spirit of revenge. He vowed vengeance, not alone for himself, but his two friends Stocks and Snape, who gloated over the very idea of it, saying, "Ay, that's right! trounce him! trounce him! Bring his proud stomach down!"

The very first steps towards Mr. Pepper's revenge was to mutilate the estate for ever, and to render it impossible that it should ever revert to the Flamsteads. He stated therefore to the assignees that as it had been found fruitless to attempt to sell the estate as a whole, it was now necessary to adopt another plan. The estate must be divided into so many lots, each of which would be sold separately as circumstances might dictate. Thus people of less property might be accommodated; farmers who might wish to buy a single farm to live upon; people who did not want estates but only investments. The house had better, as an incumbrance to any one lot, be at once sold in lots for building materials, and so pulled down and done away with.

It was in pursuance of this malicious policy that it had been, as already stated, found by Mr. John Fox

measured out into sundry lots, and those lots chalked upon them in huge figures ; a fact which had filled him with such a fit of indignation, and had sent him off in such a hurry to Derby. But before we proceed to inquire what were the results of his expedition to Derby with Mick Shay, we must say a few words.

From the first of Mr. Fox's coming into this neighbourhood he had been particularly inquisitive after Mr. Flamstead. He seemed to cherish the most agreeable recollections of the times that he had spent at Dainsby with his friend the clockmaker. He heard with deep sympathy the story of the misfortunes of the family, and they were often a subject of conversation between him, Tom Fletcher, and Mick Shay. He listened with evident strong feeling to the relation of the mournful fate of Miss Flamstead, and made Mick Shay point out to him one Sunday soon after, the grave of this amiable young lady. He made Mick also introduce him to the Widow Westbrook, to whom he spoke in warm terms of praise for her genuine friendship to the unfortunate family. He delighted to hear Mrs. Westbrook talk of the Flamsteads, and she, in her turn, was also surprised to find how much he really knew of the family history. It had been, he said, a favourite topic of the Clockmakers in their rambles when in this neighbourhood. He went one day also in Derby to see George Flamstead at the agricultural implement-makers ; saw a wonderful likeness to the clockmaker in him, when the Clockmaker was of the same age. He applauded George, whom he found shaping a piece of wood with an adze, with as much skill and as little false shame as the most regularly educated workman could possess, for his manly resolve to maintain himself by honest labour. It was just what

his uncle the Clockmaker did, and he trusted he would find it as fortunate as the Clockmaker had done

“But,” said George, “I do not find that the Clockmaker was so particularly fortunate. That he entered into an honest trade was sensible and manly, but to leave his business in its prosperity and take himself off, Heaven knows where, was not quite so great an evidence of sense.”

“There you are right,” said John Fox; “the Clockmaker’s fate is a mysterious one; we will trust that in that particular yours will be different. I like your observations, young man. And pray what do you propose to do when you enter into business for yourself?”

George raised himself, and looking at the stranger with a peculiar expression said, “That’s a very plain question, I may say, for one whom I never saw before; but as I see that you take some interest in our family I will answer it as frankly as it is put. My movements must be regulated by those of my family in a great measure. It is my first and bounden duty to contribute to their comfort. They have much at stake, and much to lose here. They have many children whose interests and happiness through life depend upon them, and they have many and subtle enemies, who are on the watch to snatch away from them every means of future support both for them and their children. I know not how far I may be able to defend or assist them, for I know little of the law, and we have few relatives who seem disposed to stand by us in the assertion of our rights; but I will do what I can, more or less, and I feel that I am called upon to be always at hand and always on the watch to be useful.”—“That is well said,” rejoined John Fox; “but were you not held by such

considerations what course would you choose for yourself?"—"For myself?" said George; "for myself there is but one choice—away to America. Here, to succeed, wants money, friends, a peculiar auspiciousness of fortune; but there!" said he, his eyes flashing with enthusiasm, "this axe would be enough for me. I would labour till I had some hoard of dollars, and then the far west should find me a field of action, in which I should not fear to find a new and ample estate. What cannot youth, enterprise, study, and perseverance accomplish if they have but such an ample field?"—"There spoke the Clockmaker again," said Mr. Fox, smiling. "How do we see, every day, how much easier it is to see other people's faults than our own! It was but just now that you blamed the Clockmaker for the very spirit of enterprise which you now show yourself so entirely to possess."—"Yes, but," said George, "there is a difference. If I had here a business like the Clockmaker's I should certainly stay and make the most of it. The Clockmaker abandoned both that and a really independent fortune to vanish—Heaven knows whither!"—"That is true indeed," said the old gentleman. "He might be of great service were he here now. But if he be not here there is a friend of his; and I say cheer up, George Flamstead; I like your spirit much, and there may come a day when I may be able to be of use to you."

He shook George cordially by the hand, bade him be sure to go to see him when he went to Leniscar, and went away leaving George full of strange speculations.

"This man," said he to himself, "seems a very sensible person. He seems to like our family; he may one day be of use, he says, and he is rich, Mick

Shay says. Ay, what use might not such a man be of, if he were but such a fine fellow as one reads of in books. I should up and say to him at once 'Here is a glorious opportunity to testify an old regard for a fallen family. What are a few hundred pounds to you? Stand by this Mr. Flamstead; you may rescue him from the harpies who devour him, and make a whole family happy without harming a single hair to yourself.' And the man should say in return, 'To be sure, you are quite right, young fellow; and I will do it.' How easily such things are done on paper—but stuff! it is not so easily done on this mercenary earth. One cannot fall in with these heroes of romance—these men of great hearts and generous sentiments. All men, especially men of money, are now-a-days so dreadfully unsentimental. They are so abominably tradesman-like. I sometimes amuse myself—but that is not exactly the word—employ myself as I walk the streets with examining all the gentlemen's countenances, to see if I could find a poet or a hero among them, and I know not how it is, I think I must be miserably uncharitable; there seems nothing but a cold, polished, selfish expression on all faces. No, this old gentlemen, who however does what no one else does—walk out of his way to talk with a young fellow with an axe in his hand—will talk of sympathy, but that will be all; and that is all that I shall ask from him."

This old gentleman, however, did not only visit George, but his father also. He was sure of a cordial reception from Mr. Henry Flamstead, because he came to talk of the Clockmaker. He declared that he remembered Henry Flamstead as a little boy, having seen him once at his uncle's, and described

his appearance and dress, which were exactly those of himself, in a miniature of himself at that age, which he possessed. He tried to recall some remembrance of the stranger, and had a strange feeling that he had certainly seen him—nay, could recall the tones of his voice—but yet could make out nothing clearly. They talked for many hours of the Clockmaker, for whom Henry Flamstead could not sufficiently express his affectionate remembrance ; of the confidence he entertained, that, were he here, he would, by the energy of his character, speedily relieve him from his ruthless enemies. From this they went into the affairs of the estate ; and the old gentleman, who seemed well acquainted with the laws and usages connected with property, displayed much interest in diving into all the intricacies of the question, and in endeavouring to make himself master of all its difficulties. His good sense, his affability, his knowledge of the world and foreign lands, but above all his praises of the fine spirit of George, made Mr. Fox speedily a welcome visitor at the cottage ; and it became a frequent afternoon's walk of his over there, when he would listen to all Mr. Flamstead's details of his views and his troubles with his creditors. It was not long before he seemed to have possessed himself of a clear notion of the case, and pointed out to Mr. Flamstead where he thought matters had gone wrong, and what were the great obstacles in the way of his ever recovering his property. That Mr. Screw Pepper was an arch scoundrel, and was pluming himself from the spoils of the estate, he declared himself as sure of as that he lived. He promised to keep an eye on the affair, and to give Mr. Flamstead any advice and aid that he could, whenever there appeared any opportunity

of doing so. Mr. Flamstead was no little elated by the acquisition of the acquaintance of this able and experienced man, and was never so happy as when he saw him marching slowly down the towing-path of the canal, with his curious fox-stick in his hand. He was quickly seen from a little window near the fire-place, by which the approach of the boats was watched, and Miss Nancy, to whom he showed a great liking, speedily began to set out the tea-things, and send off one of the children for some fresh radishes out of the garden, and cresses from the brook that ran at its bottom. He was very attentive to Mrs. Flamstead, whose health was now much better, though she was far from having regained the sunny brightness and joyousness of her former life. Her genuine religion induced her to strive for contentment and thankfulness, that in the troubles that had overtaken them, they had been favoured with a haven of shelter, humble and lowly as it was. But the experience and habits of her whole earlier life led her at the same time deeply to regret what they had lost, when she looked round and saw her troop of blooming children, and asked herself how they were to be educated—how established in life!—if they were really to descend from the station which their fathers had always occupied, and to have to battle with the roughest circumstances of life; it was enough to fall with a dismal heaviness on her heart. Then there was her excellent husband, patiently but with a downcast spirit performing his humble duties for his humble pittance, while the daily and the hourly thought of his bosom was the blight of all his hopes—the ruin of his paternal estate! Then there was George, so good, so sensible, so dutiful and self-sacrificing, who, instead of the heir of Dainsby, was

the labouring companion of artisans; and, finally, there was the sorrowful fate of Betsey—a wringing memory to a mother's heart. It must be confessed that Mrs. Flamstead had enough to bend her down with sighs and tears!

On these subjects how many hours did she converse with Mr. Fox! There was a sincere tone of sympathy that drew her to him. He listened, and without denying that her sorrows had a deep and bitter root, he would still throw in a consolatory hope; things, he trusted, would mend. They had at least a certain, though a somewhat distant prospect of wealth, even if Dainsby were not rescued from its devourers. But even that he hoped. He was indignant at the lawyer. It would, he said, give him genuine satisfaction to see that fellow well exposed and punished. Nay, he would willingly give a few hundreds towards that object himself; for of all things did his soul loathe an undermining upstart of a pettifogging lawyer!

The energy with which Mr. Fox spoke on these subjects, never failed to kindle their sympathy and lighten their hearts. Oh! how cheering, how ingratiating it is, when the world deals hardly with us, to hear the genuine tones of warm-hearted truth. At such times Nancy would draw near to the old man and gaze on him in admiration that she could not suppress, till, sometimes his eye catching the delighted expression of her face, he would put his hand on her shoulder, and say, "Why, my dear girl, your face is a morning sun in spring; it seems to bring back all one's youth with its green leaves and its dew!"

But while Mr. Fox grew more and more interested in the Flamsteads, and more and more a favourite with them, when talking with Tom Fletcher and Michael Shaw, he would often say, "Well, Henry Flamstead

is an excellent man. I think I never saw a man of purer and simpler mind and feelings. He is a real gentleman; but somehow, I must confess, that I do think he has been somewhat too much of the gentleman. How many generations had his ancestors kept Dainsby Old Hall and its lands together? and it is not to be supposed that any one of that old race of hardy, careful men would have ever allowed a Screw Pepper, or any of his tribe, to put a foot on their soil. I am afraid that Mr. Henry was not altogether a man of business."

"No, that's just what I've always said," Tom Fletcher would remark; "he's a good gentleman as ever was born; but he's, let me tell you, too fine fingered, too delicate, for these times. It always used to give me a comical feeling when I seed him riding on a fine horse, with clean doe-skin gloves on. 'That was not the way thy fathers got their stuff together,' I used to say to myself."

"Hold thy tongue, Tom!" Miek would break in. "Do'st think it was th' doe-skin gloves and the fine horse that lost Dainsby. No—not it! It was change of the times. I'll say this, that I never saw a gentleman, no, nor even a farmer, look after his business better than he did. He rode a fine horse! Well, he could the sooner look after a lot of men. He wore doe-skin gloves! Well, he was a gentleman, and had the education of a gentleman; and there's an old proverb, 'that a master's eye is worth a score of masters' hands.' Never tell me that Mr. Flainstead did not use his eyes! My word though, but I never met with a man, gentle nor simple, that knew the value of a quarter of corn better than he! But the times took him in, and many another, as elever as him; and when a man's down, it's down with him, and every fool is ready to set a foot on him.

If Mr. Flamstead had not had a conscience, he would have beaten that Screw Pepper to nothing. But that's what it is, th' one's a gentleman with a conscience, th' other's a rogue without one; and it needs no conjurer to tell which of the two has the better of the strift. But this I say, and will say before any man, Mr. Flamstead has no occasion to hold down his head before any man alive, for he never did the thing that he need be ashamed of; and if right things prosper, and there's a Providence in heaven, he'll raise his head one day above all his enemies, and sit in Dainsby Old Hall again like any lord!"

That Mr. John Fox, although he seemed to side with Tom Fletcher, always evidently delighted to hear Michael thus hold forth, Michael himself thought; for when he went away on such evenings, the old gentleman would give him a hearty shake of the hand at parting, and say—"Good bye, Michael, thou hast a good heart at any rate." At which Michael would touch his hat, and say to himself, "And I think I know another that has."

Such were the conversations both at the Flamsteads' cottage and at Tom Fletcher's, that were suddenly interrupted by the journey to Derby, about the Old Hall. I must now take a view of the consequences of that hasty trip.

CHAPTER XII.

THE OLD CLOCK WOUND UP AGAIN.

ON their arrival in Derby, Mr. John Fox ordered Michael Shaw to drive to the office of Harpur and Fife, the lawyers. This was the great law firm of the place. There was none of the small smartness of Mr. Screw

Pepper's offices about those of Harpur and Fife. They were, on the contrary, spacious, still, and substantial. Mr. Fox dismissed Michael to the inn, bidding him be ready to attend to any message he might send him, and then entered the lobby of Harpur and Fife's offices. Here he saw on various doors brass-plates bearing the inscriptions—"Mr. Harpur's office," "Mr. Fife's office," "Clerks' office," "Private office," &c. &c. On another brass-plate in the wall stood conspicuously, "Porter's bell," and the handle of the bell hung just above it, with a "Here I am, you see; why don't you ring me?" sort of look. Mr. Fox instantly did ring it, and a grave man in drab livery appearing, he inquired whether Mr. Harpur was in? To which the grave man as gravely replied, that he would inquire. On this he stepped into Mr. Harpur's office, and came out again, begging to be favoured with the gentleman's name. It was given. Instantly the grave man returned with a much livelier air, and begged Mr. Fox to walk in. This he did, but instead of Mr. Harpur, he found only Mr. Harpur's clerk, who informed him that Mr. Harpur was not at this moment within. It was, indeed, far beyond the hours at which either of the principals attended at the office; but that if Mr. Fox had business of importance, he had no doubt but that Mr. Fife could be found at home, and he would send for him. Mr. Fox replied that his business was with Mr. Harpur, and that he must see him at once.

The clerk gave a sort of wondering stare, said that Mr. Harpur was not in the habit of attending to any but the most extraordinary business after four o'clock, and that now it would be just after his dinner hour, when they had the strictest orders not send to him, except on matters almost of life and death. "Give me

his address at once," said Mr. Fox ; " or, by-the-by, I think I know it well enough—I will go to him." —"Very well, sir," said the clerk, as if he had the strongest certainty that the gentleman would not be permitted to disturb Mr. Harpur's evening repose.

As Mr. Fox returned through the lobby, the clerks' office-door stood open, and he could see by the lamps still burning that it was a very extensive apartment, and bore every mark of that great practice which Harpur and Fife were known to possess.

The clerk who, by Mr. Fox's manner, seemed inspired by a certain respect, and as if he had a feeling that the gentleman's name stood in the books in characters of importance, offered to send a guide with him ; but Mr. Fox said that he knew the address pretty well by letter, and that he wished to try his memory as to the localities of the town ; adding, as he bustled away, " And, besides, I've an English tongue in my head—I shall not get far wrong."

Mr. Fox made his way to a long and wide street, very different to any other street in the town, and paused before a pair of large gates, where the house seemed to stand in the court, within a lofty wall. A pull at the bell, and he was admitted by the lodge-porter's wife, who, on his saying that he was going to see Mr. Harpur, unlike the clerk, made no remark, and let him pass on. Mr. Fox, by the well-lighted lamp which hung over the hall door, could see that the house and premises were of princely size and character. On one side of the court opened a fine garden ; on the other, were the outbuildings. There was a colonnade along the house-front, and the lamp-light flung down into it, showed lofty, and substantial, and well-painted, and well-kept doors and windows. In fact, all around displayed the presence of wealth,

and a quiet state. Mr. Harpur, indeed, was the great legal man of the county. He had been near half a century in practice. He was the steward of half-a-dozen noblemen, and had had transactions with the affairs of many others, as well as with nearly every landed proprietor of the county. He was the clerk of the county court; treasurer of a variety of public institutions: and the great pillar on which the magistrates depended in all their weightier difficulties—the prisons, the house of correction, every such thing saw in him a visitor, and the most influential of visitors. In short, he was the great man of the place. There was nothing like the petty smartness of Mr. Screw Pepper about him, or his whereabouts. Quietness was the characteristic that belonged to him. A large, quiet house; ample, quiet gardens; quiet servants; a quiet, very lady-like wife, who, in a very well built, but not showy carriage, made her calls on the ladies of the county, and was always at the head of all balls, assemblies, concerts, and such things, with her husband, and the *élite* of the town. Mr. Harpur was a portly man, whose well-fed countenance had the rich, but not rude tint, which evidenced of long enjoyment of haunches of venison, and good old port. He could be very solemn, or very affable, and even jocose in his manner. To Mr. Screw Pepper, and such people, he was the former, and this man, always ready enough to show his airs to others, behaved with the profoundest respect to Mr. Harpur, and deferred to his judgment with the most ludicrous servility, in matters of business.

Mr. Fox was speedily admitted to Mr. Harpur. The great man quickly appeared, recognised Mr. Fox as an old acquaintance, shook him heartily by the hand, and bade him come along. Tea was in the drawing-room, and he must introduce him to Mrs.

Harpur. Mr. Fox declared that he should have much pleasure to make the acquaintance of Mrs. Harpur, and would therefore step into the drawing-room for a few minutes, and should indeed be glad of a cup of tea ; but that he must beg Mr. Harpur's attention for a few minutes in privacy. Mr. Harpur called for lights, and led the way to his library, where Mr. Fox had so soon explained his errand that both gentlemen were quickly in Mrs. Harpur's large and splendid drawing-room, chatting with Mrs. Harpur on a variety of things and persons, that to my reader would prove only so many puzzles, without a world of preliminary explanation. We will leave them to spend a comfortable evening together without further remark, than that Michael Shaw received an order from Mr. Fox to take a good horse at day-break and convey the letter which was given to him to Mr. Henry Flamstead, and return, if possible, with an answer by ten o'clock. The commission was duly executed by Michael, and at ten Mr. Fox took his way again to the office of Harpur and Fife, where he was conducted by the grave porter, at his first glance, and without a word, to the office of Mr. Harpur, and where Mr. Harpur was not only in waiting, but Mr. Screw Pepper also very soon made his appearance.

Mr. Harpur, with a formal politeness, presented Mr. Pepper a chair, observing, "This gentleman, Mr. Pepper, is a friend of Mr. Flamstead, of Dainsly, and is requested by his friend to make some inquiries into the present position of the affairs of the bankruptcy."

Mr. Screw Pepper cast a glance at Mr. Fox, made a grave bow, to which he received one very much its counterpart from Mr. Fox. It was evident that such a thing as a friend of Mr. Flamstead making

any inquiry into these affairs, and especially so substantial looking a friend, and in such a place as the office of Mr. Harpur, was quite a new and unexpected thing to him. "He would be very happy," he observed, "to give the gentleman any information in his power. He could assure him that it had been a very troublesome business."—"I should think so," replied Mr. Fox, "for it has now, by all accounts, been five years in hand, and is, as I find it, now in a very awkward case, if it be necessary to pull down the Hall, and to dispose of the estate in parcels. You must indeed have been very unsuccessful in your efforts to sell, if that be necessary."—"My dear sir," said Mr. Screw Pepper, "if I were to give you a full history of all the difficulties we have had to contend with, it would be a very long history indeed. The fact is as you see it; we are at our wits' end, and shall be thankful indeed to get enough to cover all expenses, by every contrivance that we can."—"On the other hand," said Mr. Fox, "my friend Flamstead makes the most lamentable complaints of ill-usage: that such is the real value of the estate that there was no just cause to take it out of his hands; that it has been grossly mismanaged; that he has not been fairly dealt by, or the estate would long ago have been sold and a handsome surplus handed over to him."

Mr. Screw Pepper reddened at this statement; but on recollecting where and in what presence he was, he assumed a mild and injured air, and said, "This does not surprise me, sir, I assure you, at all. I and the assignees have had much to bear from the petulance and insinuations of Mr. Flamstead. Perhaps, however, it was only natural that a man who had lost so handsome a property by his own imprudence, and was by no means, as might be supposed,

a nice calculator, should feel irritated by seeing everything in the world gone from him. Believe me, no management could satisfy such a man; but this he would say," continued he, "for himself and the assignees, that happy should they be at any time to receive an offer which would cover the debts."—"And what may the amount of those debts be?" inquired Mr. Fox.—"Thirty thousand pounds."—"Thirty thousand pounds; and did Mr. Screw Pepper mean to say that the estate would not fetch that sum?"—"Yes, that sum it certainly would fetch; but then there were also the legal charges for law proceedings, agency, and measures necessary to effect a sale, which of necessity was altogether a large sum"—"And what sum?" asked Mr. Fox.

Mr. Screw Pepper hesitated—"He did not know that he was at liberty to expose the affairs of the bankruptcy, at least without knowing what was the gentleman's object in these inquiries. At the proper time both Mr. Flamstead and all others whom it concerned would have a proper statement."

"But Mr. Pepper," said Mr. Harpur, "it seems to me only fair to give a candid statement to this gentleman. The bankrupt has certainly in such an estate a great matter of interest as well as his creditors. Now I, as a lawyer, know that large expenses must and will have accumulated, and I say that I, as a lawyer, were I engaged in this business, should have no hesitation to state them. Perhaps they may be as much as ten thousand pounds?"

"They are more, I believe," said Mr. Screw Pepper, but with evident reluctance.

"Well," said Mr. Fox, "say that they could by any possibility be twenty thousand pounds—that would make but fifty thousand—and you do not

really mean to say that the estate would not fetch in the market that sum, without the necessity of pulling it, as it were, to pieces?"

"Yes, I mean to say that. I protest to you that we have never yet been able to obtain such an offer."

"And you would be glad to get such a one?"

"Glad! yes, indeed, we should," said Mr. Pepper, resuming something of his chuckling and self-complacent manner; "but I am afraid that we might wait, not for five, but for ten years before we could possibly obtain that. We should jump at it."

"You would?—then let me tell you," said Mr. Fox, "that I am the purchaser."

"You the purchaser, for fifty thousand pounds?"

"I!" repeated Mr. Fox, in the same tone as the astonished lawyer, "the purchaser for fifty thousand pounds; that is to say, I will purchase the estate here on the spot, without a single look at it, for that sum, it being always understood that nothing but fair and just debts and expenses shall be paid; and whatever surplus shall remain of that sum, shall be paid over to my friend Flamstead."

"Of course," said Mr. Harpur.

"Of course," said Mr. Screw Pepper, but with a strange sort of chop-fallen melancholy; adding, however, "but let us see—the sale is advertised to come off in a few days—had not the gentleman better take the chance of the biddings? he might get it for something less.—" Mr. Screw Pepper," said Mr. Harpur gravely, "that is now quite out of the question. My friend here wishes to preserve the house and estate entire. He might risk a part of this at a public sale. Besides, you have advertised the *house* in lots: you cannot have the sale except on these conditions. That would not suit my client—in short, the thing is

done—you have made your offer, and it has been accepted.”—“Oh yes,” said Mr. Pepper flurriedly, “so far as I am concerned, oh yes! but still, you see the assignees may not be satisfied to forego the sale. I am taken somewhat by surprise. I—”

“Mr. Pepper,” said Mr. Harpur, still more gravely, and with a certain severe sternness, “what am I to think? You declare positively that you have never been able to obtain such an offer; that you never expect such a one if you were to wait five or ten years. Pray, what do you mean? As a professional man, I hope you will reflect on what you are doing. I am evidence that the estate is bought and sold.”

Mr. Pepper seemed to gasp for breath, he was pale as he hesitated, but saw what was inevitable, and added in a low tone, “Very well; there is one thing, however, necessary, and that is, that I should understand clearly this gentleman’s responsibility—of course, Mr. Harpur, seeing him as your client, I do not doubt this; but, as the sale is fixed, it could not be put off without the utmost certainty that this bargain will be completed.” Mr. Fox nodded to Mr. Harpur, who then said, “You will have a deposit as guarantee against all such chance. Mr. Pepper, what do you require for that purpose?”—“Five thousand pounds.”—“Have the goodness to give him a cheque for *ten* thousand,” said Mr. Fox.

Mr. Pepper looked astonished at the stranger. Mr. Harpur sat down, drew forth a cheque-book, and wrote a cheque for the specified sum. As he handed it to Mr. Pepper, he said, “You will see now that it is necessary to draw up the agreement on the spot.” He rung the bell, a certain clerk was ordered to be sent for, to whom Mr. Harpur dictated the terms of the agreement for the sale of Dainsby Old Hall and

estate. Into the particulars of this we need not enter. It was agreed that the draft of conveyance should be ready by a certain day, and that the estate should be conveyed free of all mortgages, debts, or incumbrances whatever, the purchaser guaranteeing to pay the purchase-money into the hands of Messrs. Harpur and Fife, before signing the title-deeds.

Mr. Screw Pepper then took his leave, and no sooner was the door of the office closed upon him, than Mr. Harpur turned to Mr. Fox, and laughing said, "A fox indeed you are, my friend. You have fairly entrapped this wily Screw Pepper, or corkscrew, we might call him. He will hang himself for vexation. But I have not done with him yet. I promise you he shall have a proper sifting, and not one shilling shall he get of his bill, which is not justly his due."

When Mr. Fox appeared at the inn again, he was in the brightest spirits. He ordered a famous dinner, and some fine old port in, and Michael and he sat and enjoyed themselves famously. It was not, however, till they were driving homeward that Mr. Fox said, "Well, Michael, I think we have put a scotch into this Mr. Screw Pepper's wheel at last. I've stopped the sale."—"Well done! well done!" said Michael, "that was a bit of work worth being in a hurry for. Let's make haste and carry the news." Michael with this gave his horse the whip, and away they went at full speed.—"You've really stopped the sale!" "I've done more than that—I've bought the estate!" "You've bought the estate!—for Mr. Flamstead, I reckon."—"For Mr. Flamstead? Oh, Mick, I wish I could; but where was he to get the money? I am afraid there will be nothing over when all is paid. No, I've done the best thing I could. I bought the Hall and the estate, to prevent them being pulled to

pieces. Only think what a grief it would have been to all the family to have the old house pulled down stick and stone.”—“To be sure,” said Michael, with a cold sort of voice—“but somehow I always counted on the old place coming to Mr. Flamstead again—I am afraid it will hurt him when he hears of it.”

“What!” said Mr. Fox, “when he hears that I’ve bought it, and that he can come there as often as he likes? Michael you don’t congratulate me then?”

“Why yes, I congratulate you—dang my buttons! I don’t know rightly what I should think.” And Michael fell into a deep silence again, which was uninterrupted for the rest of the way. Mr. Fox alighted at his cottage, saying to Michael—“I am in your debt, Michael—we will settle when I see you next,” and Michael, with a strange look, gave his horse a cut and drove away.

The next day Mr. Fox met Tom Fletcher, and was about to put out his hand to give him a shake, but Tom kept his hands in his pockets, gave a sort of nod, said “A fine day, Mester,” and strode on.

“That fellow, Mick, is affronted that I have bought the Flamstead estate for myself,” said Mr. Fox, “and has communicated his ill-humour to this surly old carrier, now!”

Mr. Fox did not enter Tom’s cottage that day, but steered his way to the Flamsteads. He had, in the letter which Mick had fetched from Mr. Flamstead, received his full permission to do whatever he thought right on his behalf, and “could I,” said he to himself, “do better than save the estate from utter ruin? They will certainly be well pleased with what I have done.”

It was a pleasant autumn evening as he drew near Mr. Flamstead’s cottage; the sun shone glowingly

on his garden. The goldfinch hung in the porch over the door, and was picking his groundsel seeds from between the wires of his cage, and chirping melodiously as if overflowing with happiness. All looked full of peaceful domestic joy. Mr. Fox opened the door—the family sat together at tea.

“Just in time!” said John Fox, who went up and shook Mr. and Mrs. Flamstead by the hand heartily, gave Miss Nancy a pleasant nod, bade her be going on and he would take a chair for himself. Nancy handed him a cup of tea.

“Well,” said he, as he placed it before him, “we’ve caught this Mr. Pepper at last I think. Do you know, I have bought the estate.”

“I hear so,” said Mr. Flamstead, coolly; Mrs. Flamstead sighed; and there was a strange silence.

“What the dickens!” thought John Fox, “they’re discontented too! Now what *would* people have? Did they expect that I should buy the property and make them a present of it? Zounds! I must see if I can’t drive a little sense into them!”

He then went on to tell in what condition he found the property, and related all the particulars of the interview with Screw Pepper, adding, however, that he hoped out of the fifty thousand pounds, that when all just demands were paid, a handsome surplus would remain for Mr. Flamstead.

“You are very good, Mr. Fox,” said Mr. Flamstead, and again there was silence.

“Well,” said Mr. Fox, “I did hope that I should have pleased you. I confess, too, that I all my life have had a liking for this old place, and should be proud to be the possessor of it; but as you do not seem pleased, I can only say that if you can find a friend, before the title-deeds are signed, who will

advance you the money, I will give up the bargain to you."

"You are very good," again said Mr. Flamstead, "but you know very well that I have no such friend—I have but one—and if he be living he is not here—you may, therefore, safely say what you do—and yet let me say, you may well call it a bargain. Fifty thousand pounds! yes, indeed it is a bargain!"

"Well," rejoined Mr. Fox, "I can sincerely enter into your feelings, Mr. Flamstead. I know how you must feel, and I will tell you at once, that so far from wishing to make any bargain at your expense, we will have, if you please, the whole estate valued by fair and honest men, and I will pay its full value. You shall have that, and all that I can wring out of this miserable lawyer—I don't wish to be hard—nay, I must confess that I want to serve you both out of regard for you and your family; and I have pleased myself with this idea, that George might come and manage the estate for me."

These statements seemed to excite a good deal of surprise, and to soften down wonderfully the minds of the family. They said it was really kind, really very generous, there was a great cordiality. Nancy put away the cup of tea, that Mr. Fox had allowed to stand till it was cold, and poured him out some fresh, holding out to him the plate of bread-and-butter, and pressing him to make a good tea after his walk. But somehow, there was a weight, a sadness, a constraint still in the house, and Mr. John Fox took an early and dissatisfied leave.

In the course of the following week the old gentleman walked down to Dainsby. He strolled past the hall gates, contemplating, no doubt, the time when he should be in possession of it, and then made a visit

to the Widow Westbrook. The buxom widow was in her yard feeding a brood of pheasants that had been reared under a hen, the old bird having been killed by a labourer accidentally, as she sat on her nest. Mr. Fox was not without apprehensions that the coldness which had so manifested itself in Michael and Tom, and the Flamsteads, would also meet him here. But to his agreeable surprise Mrs. Westbrook was as smiling and as cordial as ever. After some conversation on the pheasants, she said good-humouredly, "Well, Mr. Fox, I hear that you have bought the Dainsby estate!"—"Yes, I have."—"Oh, I am so pleased, you don't know. To think that we shall have that dear, good family, after all they have suffered, in the old place again."—"What?" said Mr. Fox, "how?" *I've bought it, do you understand, Mrs. Westbrook, and not *they*.*"—"Oh yes, I understand—you've bought it, but for *them* of course!"—"How of course, Mrs. Westbrook? how of course? I should be glad to know."—"Why, you *have* bought it for them and not for yourself, Mr. Fox," said Mrs. Westbrook, gravely and with evident surprise, "I never dreamed of any thing else."—"And pray, Mrs. Westbrook," said Mr. Fox, "as you are a clever woman of business, can you tell me where the Flamsteads are to get the money from to pay for it?"—"The money to pay for it? Why from you to be sure, Mr. Fox, what else? That's what I always made myself sure of when I heard you had bought it. 'He is fond of the family,' I said, 'and has determined to buy it for them to get them out of that wretch's hands, and then he will let his money lie on mortgage, and all will be as it should be.'"—"As it should be, Mrs. Westbrook? If I am to credit the assignees there will be little or no surplus when the

debts are paid, and then what is there to pay the interest of so large a sum as fifty thousand pounds?" — "Oh, the rental will pay that sure enough, and in a few years all that money of the Clockmaker's will drop in and clear off everything."

Mr. Fox shook his head; "I am afraid, Mrs. Westbrook," said he, "that at my time of life it would not be reckoned a very sane thing to depend on the money of the Clockmaker. 'A bird in the hand,' is the maxim, you know, of old."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Westbrook, casting an indignant and contemptuous glance at Mr. Fox, "I see how it is. After all, you are no better than the rest. You go about pretending such a friendship for the old Clockmaker, and for the family, and it's only to worm yourself into all the secrets of the affairs, and then you pop in and buy the place for yourself. Now, I'll tell you just what I think of you, and that is, you are a hypocritical, sneaking, designing old fellow! What family have you, pray, that you should need such a hall and estate for as this? Surely you could, at least, have bought the place conditionally for the Flamsteads, and let them have it when their uncle's money does come in. Out upon you, Mr. Fox! out upon you!"

Mrs. Westbrook rose in her indignation, as it were, six inches higher in her shoes. She was as warm and as rosy as one of her own pæonies; and poor Mr. Fox seemed to shrink up dwarfed and confounded before her.

She flung the last food out of the basin to the pheasants, and was turning disdainfully away, when Mr. Fox said, "You are very hard upon me, Mrs. Westbrook, very hard. You do not consider that I have nephews and nieces of my own that look to me

for provision, and I cannot really buy large estates to give away to friends.”—“ Oh, you have relations, have you? I see how it is. There’s worse than no chance for the Flamsteads at all, then. Oh, you cunning old Fox, why did you not mention these relations before? I’ve done with you! Get out of my yard—I’ve done with you!”

Mrs. Westbrook turned into her house like a storm-wind. Poor Mr. Fox stood a moment looking after her, and then retraced his way up the village, apparently in no very agreeable frame of mind.

But rich men have wonderful powers of reconciliation. It was not long before Tom Fletcher and Michael Shaw were quite won over by Mr. Fox. They took up his cause; they were as friendly as ever with him; nay, they argued with Mrs. Westbrook in his favour.

“ What would people have?” they said. “ What can the man do? He has saved the estate from being torn to pieces—has he not? He has done more than any one else has done. And who expects, now-a-days, that people are going to give estates away. Has he not fairly bought it, and offered to let the Flamsteads have it, if they can pay for it, and more than that, to get all he can out of the assignees for them—and to give even more for the property, if it be worth it? What more can you want?”

“ That man can persuade those two fools to anything,” said Mrs. Westbrook, angrily. “ They shall never come about my place!” There was quite a feud. The Flamsteads and Mrs. Westbrook held more warmly, more closely than ever together—whilst the zealous widow looked as coldly on Mr. Fox, Tom, and Michael, as the cold and distant Alps on the far-off plains of Italy.

Time rolled on, and at length, in October, Mr Fox informed Tom and Michael that all was settled; the writings were signed, and he was empowered to enter at once on possession. These two worthies, who now entered with all the zeal of partizans into the cause of Mr. Fox, begged to have the pleasure of going to turn out old Gideon Spine and his family; and having obtained this permission, away they went in Michael's taxed-cart. They whirled up to the great gate, which they found locked; and gave a famous pull at the bell, which rang out loud and hollow as bells do sound in great, deserted places.

"What grass there is growing i'th' court," said Tom Fletcher, as he peeped through the bars of the gate; "and what bushes there hangen from th' very pillars o' th' gates, and what a nation heap o' jack-a-daws about th' place! But here comes th' ould woman!"

This was Mrs. Gideon Spine, who was coming to open the gate. Having told her that they wanted to speak with Gideon, they followed her up the court, rejoicing themselves in the thought of speedily packing Gideon and all his brood out of the house. When they had, however, advanced a little way, they saw in a sunny corner two or three children seated on the ground, and making circles of stones, which they were imagining to be houses and fire-places, as children do. The sight, simple as it was, someway considerably abated their ardour. "Poor things," said Mick to himself, "they are not in fault, and yet they must pack—it's hard, though!"

But while this was passing in Michael's mind, there appeared old Gideon at the hall-door, who, holding it half-open, called loudly for his wife to come to him quickly. At his call the wife sprang hastily up the steps, he pulled her in, and Tom and

Michael, who followed hastily after, found the door banged in their faces, and heard the key turned in the lock, and all the heavy bolts drawn. They shook the door, knocked, shouted, but all in vain. Presently Gideon looked out of a window above, and told them that he was aware of their object, but that he held the house for the assignees, and should not surrender it without a written order from Mr. Pepper.

Our heroes were fairly baffled. They might place the house in a sort of siege with very little prospect of carrying it by storm; they therefore hastily again mounted the taxed-cart, and drove off to inform Mr. Fox. That gentleman was very indignant at the news, and declared that the very next morning he would break down the door and pitch Gideon down the steps. He set out, attended by Mick and Tom, for this adventurous purpose; but, to their common surprise, on arriving there, they found the doors open, and the whole Spine family fled.

There was now a speedy influx of bricklayers and carpenters into the Hall. Men were set to work to lop away wild boughs and break up and re-gravel walks, and women to weed and dig away with knives the grass from the crevices of the court-pavement. All was life and bustle where desolation and silence had reigned so long. It was amazing what a change a few weeks effected. But this change, this bustle, this employment of so many people, seemed to cast deeper sadness on the Flamsteads, and to make Mrs. Westbrook only the more disinclined for accommodation with Mr. Fox or Michael. There was a regular schism. True, however, in about six weeks there was some little abatement in the violence of her feelings, from the fact of Mr. Flamstead receiving a letter from Mr. Fox, stating that Mr. Harpur having

had Mr. Screw Pepper's bill taxed, ten thousand pounds had been struck off at once, which Mr. Fox had paid into Smith's bank for Mr. Flamstead. Mr. Flamstead was much affected by this ; he called on Mr. Fox, and gave him his warmest thanks. He begged that he would overlook any feeling which himself or his family had shown, but that he trusted Mr. Fox would understand the excited and irritable state of their minds. The old gentleman not only received Mr. Flamstead very cordially, but pressed him to come often to visit him.

Time rolled on, and it was wonderful to see how rapidly things rolled on with it. All within and without the Hall assumed the most prosperous air. On the other hand, the Flamsteads had given up the post on the canal, and had taken a pretty house about a mile from Dainsby. In Derby, since Mr. Harpur had got hold of the business, such discoveries were made of the dishonest transactions of Mr. Screw Pepper, that not only had the said amazing sum of ten thousand pounds been struck off his bill, but Mr. Harpur declared he never would cease till he was struck off the roll of attorneys. So vigorously did he prosecute this object that one day it was rumoured that Mr. Pepper had not only taken himself off to America, but had carried off with him the money of Ned Stocks and Peter Snape, which had been left in his hands for him to invest again for them. This was news that seemed to rejoice everybody that heard it, for these greedy and remorseless men were the original cause of all the Flamsteads' troubles. At the winding up of the accounts of the Dainsby estate five thousand pounds more out of the fifty thousand paid by Mr. John Fox were handed over to Mr. Flamstead.

So far had these circumstances, and the very friendly disposition of Mr. Fox towards the Flamstead family, softened every painful feeling occasioned by his purchase of the estate, that though none of them had ventured near the Hall since he had removed to it, yet as Christmas was approaching, Mr. Fox ventured on the bold experiment of inviting the whole family to come and eat their Christmas dinner with him. He knew, he said, that it would be a hard struggle for them, but to make it easier he would invite them all alone, and he hinted that, as he expressed it, the ice once broken, they would not find it again difficult.

It was a hard combat between sensibility and a sense of duty. Fifteen thousand pounds Mr. Fox had been the means of saving to them; he had rid them and the country of their worst enemy; he had saved the estate and the beloved old house from dismemberment and ruin; and who could tell whether or not one day, when the Clockmaker's fortune fell in, they might not have a chance of purchasing it once more. Besides this, the old gentleman still declared that he would have the estate valued, and that they should have the benefit of it; and still offered George a handsome income to live with him, and to become his steward.

These considerations were not to be overlooked. They put a stern restraint on their feelings, and resolved, cost what it would, to accept the invitation.

The day came. As the dinner hour approached, the Flamsteads in their simple barouche drove up the village, and up to the Hall gates. The villagers gazed all from their windows as they went in that direction; and when they actually saw them take the turn to the Hall, they were lost in astonishment.

Why they are actually going to the Hall! They are actually gone there! How can they bear to see that old place in the hands of a stranger?

Yes, we may repeat the question, and say, How could they? It was a severe trial. As the servants in rich liveries came out on the steps to receive them, I believe that there was not one of the party who did not tremble every limb. They entered the well-known hall. How exactly was everything as it had been! but how bright and beautiful! There was the curious cuckoo-clock which had been made by Nicholas Flamstead, but without his name, which at that moment struck five, with the same soft ringing tones, and the cuckoo shouting from within.

Mr. Fox came from the library to meet them. He welcomed them most heartily, but yet with a respectful tenderness, which showed that he understood their feelings. He led them into the ample drawing-room that they knew so well; the very children were silent with the effect of memory, and the sense of the present. Mr. Fox led Mrs. Flamstead to the sofa, and placed her in the very spot she used so commonly to occupy; she could no longer contain herself, and her tears, spite of herself, burst forth. The kind host did not seem to notice it, but bustled about, and made every one be seated, and then began talking of the villain Pepper—a subject which he hoped would arouse them, and turn them a little from the present scene. He told them of the sharp pursuit which had been made after him, and the narrow escape he had had of being taken on board the vessel, when under sail from Liverpool. He then entered into other details of his notorious exploits. Dinner was announced, and he led in Mrs. Flamstead.

There was an awkwardness here that even Mr. Fox

seemed to feel vividly. At the head of that table had Mrs. Flamstead so many years presided. But he said, "Here, my dear Mrs. Flamstead, you are very delicate, you must take your seat by me. Miss Nancy will oblige me by taking the head of the table." They sat down in silence. It was a heavy affair. Old feelings and memories came crowding upon them on so many sides, that the dinner seemed rather to choke them than do them any good. It was a thorough martyrdom. The host exerted himself wonderfully to talk and to infuse some liveliness into the group, but it did not succeed.

When the dessert was set on the table and the servants withdrawn, the host himself seemed to breathe more freely. He put round the decanters, helped to fruit, and said, "Come, now, pray do let us be a little gayer. There is nothing which I so much wish as to accustom you to come here often, and to come with pleasure. George, my good fellow, do cut some of those oranges for us. Nancy, my dear, distribute some of those almonds and raisins amongst the youngsters. Bob there! You are fond of nuts, I know; why don't you crack some? and give Jane some, who sits beside you as meek as if she belonged to nobody. Come, let's be merry."

There were some melancholy smiles, and a vain attempt to comply, but it *was* a vain one. How *could* they be merry there?

"This will never do!" exclaimed the old gentleman, striking his hand upon the table. "We must try another song. Listen, my friends, I have some news for you. The Clockmaker—I have heard of him to-day—he is alive!"

It was as if he had given an electric shock to the whole family—they started up from their seats—

"Alive! You have heard of him? Where? How?"

Mr. Flamstead looked as if he saw a ghost. His face was ashy pale; his eyes seemed starting from his head with intense anxiety, his left hand was thrust into his hair, while his right rested on the table to support him. "Alive! Is my uncle then in England? Thank God, that I may yet see him again in life!"

"Henry," said the host solemnly, "should you know the Clockmaker if you saw him? May not forty years have altered him past your recognition?"

"No, no! I cannot believe it—I see him clearly as on the last day we parted—my uncle's form is impressed upon my memory by so much kindness—I should know him the moment I saw him!"

The old man smiled, and then shaking his head, said, "Henry, you are mistaken; you see him as he was, not as he is. Time is a cunning disguiser. You *have* seen your uncle, and did not know him. He has been with you; has talked with you, but you knew him not. *I am Nicholas Flamstead, the Clockmaker!*"

There was a moment's silence of startled astonishment, and then an exclamation, "You! you our uncle! You, indeed, our beloved, long-lost uncle!"

"I see it!" then cried Henry Flamstead, frantically striking his hand on his forehead, "how could I be so blind! How often have I felt that I knew that voice—that that eye had a familiar expression!" He sprang forward: there was a scene of embracing and weeping, and recognition, that made the very servants in the hall wonder what was the matter.

When the confusion and the excitement had somewhat abated, "Yes," said the old man, radiant with

smiles and emotion, "I am the Clockmaker—in this house I was born, and lived here a boy and a youth; from this house I went forth and commenced life for myself; a mother's blessed memory hallows this house: no wonder that it was dear to me. You are the only relations I have in this world. This house and all that it contains are yours!" His voice was here choked with emotion, and tears and sobs of affectionate gladness were heard all round him.

"What," said he, again recovering himself, "what so delightful could I picture to myself, as to spend the evening of my days amongst those who are nearest and dearest to me? I came back with a trembling heart. The circumstances of an eventful youth had made me keep aloof so long from my native land, that I hardly knew how I should find things here. News that came to me from my friend Harpur, hastened my steps. I was but just in time to save this place, and to punish a scoundrel on whose course my eye had long been fixed. Thank God that I was in time, and that now all is safe. Here is your own home; but here also is mine. I have taken the liberty to select two rooms for my own. The bed-room I used to occupy when a boy here, and the little library which overlooks my favourite view of the village. But that reminds me—we must send the news to Mrs. Westbrook; I am not quite easy till she and I are friends; she is a woman in ten thousand; I would not be a day longer out of her favour for the worth of her farm."

At this upsprung the whole troop of children, all eager to run off. "Nay! nay! stop! stop!" cried the Clockmaker. "George and Nancy, you shall stay here. What, it is so late is it, for the children?—well, it is a fine moonlight night, and not a quarter of a mile's run for them; let them go—you shall

meet them and Mrs. Westbrook at the gate, for I'll lay any money she will come back with them."

Away went the young ones, and such of the villagers as were out wondered what was the matter. Presently the whole troop burst into Mrs. Westbrook's house. "Our uncle the Clockmaker is come! our uncle the Clockmaker is come! It's Mr. Fox! he's at the Hall—we're all there, and it's to be our home again!"

They seized on the bewildered widow, and began dragging her along with them, never noticing Michael Shaw, who, dressed up in his very best, had been eating a little supper with the widow. "You must come! come instantly. He has sent for you. Papa and mamma want you—they all want you!"

By the help of Michael Shaw the Widow Westbrook soon understood the cause of all this jubilation, and presently the out-of-door villagers saw her very hastily moving along, surrounded by the Flamstead children, some of whom were skipping before her, some holding by her cloak.

The handsome widow seemed to be laughing and crying at the same time. At length some villager said to her, "What's amiss, Mrs. Westbrook. Pray what's all this about?"

"Good news!" cried the widow, pointing to the Hall, and hastening on; she could say no more, but the children cried, "Oh, yes! good news—our uncle the Clockmaker is come again!"

The news flew from house to house; and, late though it was, it reached the ears of the ringers. At once they ran off to the steeple; and before Mrs. Westbrook had reached the Hall, the bells were ringing away merrily for the return of the Clockmaker.

We need not say how George and Nancy Flamstead met the widow at the gate, or how they led her in in triumph, or how she was received by the Clockmaker and Mr. and Mrs. Flamstead.

A glorious evening was that at the Hall; and before it was over, Michael Shaw and Tom Fletcher walked in. The rogues! they had been a long time in the secret. The pretended John Fox was obliged to let them into it. O how Widow Westbrook scolded them for shabby fellows for not letting her into the secret! and yet there are those who say, that in her joy she must soon have forgiven Michael, for in the very next March their banns were published in Dainsby Church, and there was a merry wedding in April, and as merry a piece of work in transporting the windmill, and erecting it on the hill above the widow's house, on a piece of land given to him by Nicholas Flamstead as a keepsake. George was seen on this occasion with his axe and his hammer, and never was a merrier evening spent than that at the house of Widow Westb—— no, we are wrong—at that of Michael and Phoebe Shaw, where the Flamsteads, the Harpurs, and honest Tom Fletcher were assembled to celebrate the raising of the mill; and when the final toast given by Henry Flamstead was—“*The happy return of my Uncle the Clockmaker!*”

THE END.

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Illustration of a young woman in a blue dress and bonnet standing on a log over a stream in a wooded area.

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HOPE ON! HOPE EVER!

OR,

THE BOYHOOD OF FELIX LAW.

CHAPTER I.

A PEEP INTO DENT-DALE.

OF all those romantic, out-of-the-world dales in the north-west of Yorkshire, where primitive manners and feelings still remain uncontaminated by modern fashions, none are more delightful in their local scenery, or more remarkable for the genuine old English hospitality and simplicity of character of their inhabitants, than the secluded little valley of Dent. The traveller upon the highroad between Kendal and Sedburgh, passes the lower entrance to the dale; but at this point it possesses no remarkable feature. The hills on either hand are low, and smooth to the top,

with an unvaried outline; and the river, or, as it is universally called, "the beck," which is the very soul of the valley, and which, in its higher and wilder parts, plays a thousand vagaries along its rocky and sinuous bed, and fills the air with its fresh, living voice, here runs on in silence, and with an unvaried course, as if it were needful to put on a grave air before its union with the broader and deeper Rawther, which, after an onward course of about two miles, discharges itself into the Lune. Advancing upward, the dale gradually becomes narrower, and the hills on either hand higher, and broken into the most diversified forms. The bed of the river also narrows and deepens, and its banks are thickly scattered with trees—here grouped together, and hanging, with deep shadows, over the water—and there interspersed with huge masses of rock, that jut into the river, lie athwart its bed, and give it at once the character of a mountain stream.

About midway in the valley lies its hamlet, called Dent-town—a Swiss-like village, embosomed in hills, with its picturesque houses, many of which have remarkably projecting roofs, and outside staircases, leading, by a little gallery, into the chambers; its low-spired church, or "kirk," as it is called, and

its old-fashioned endowed school, of which we shall have more to say anon.

The only road in the valley lies along the bottom, mostly following the course of the water, excepting where that course is too vagrant for the road, whose purpose is business, to follow. Like a playful child, who lets go the hand of an elder and graver companion, while he runs in chase of butterflies and flowers, and returns, when he is wearied with his sport—so proceed together, along the valley, the little river and the road.

The inhabitants of the dale lie scattered on the hill-side, on either hand, each homestead being generally erected beside one of these little rivulets, sykes, or gills, as they are here called, which, collecting among the bogs of the hill-tops, form themselves, here and there, into little streams, and have worn channels down the rocky hill-sides, diversified by occasional abrupt and picturesque falls, margined by trees, often from their highest descent. Nothing can be more delightful than these little streams, hurrying down with living voices, and waters as clear as crystal, each a willing tributary to the cheerful river of the valley.

As is the case in these dales, the good people of Dent-dale form a little world in

themselves. Each is mostly the proprietor of his own little section of the hill-side—that is, between rivulet and rivulet—they forming the natural landmarks of each demesne. Two or three fields, called “pasture-heads,” are generally enclosed and cultivated near the house, where oats, wheat, and potatoes are grown for family consumption; and the lower descent of the hill, down to the level of the valley, is used for grass and hay for their horses and cows; but the upper parts, called “the fell-side,” are all grazed by large flocks of sheep, geese, and wild ponies. Sheep, however, form the wealth of the valley; and their social sheep-washings and shearings make as blithe holidays as the harvest-homes, and the wakes and fairs, of other districts.

As the greatest sociality, and the most perfect good-neighbourhood, are kept up among the inhabitants of this simple district, there is as much visiting continually going on, as in more dignified and much gayer society. In order that the Dee—for such is the name of the river—may interpose no barrier to the intercourse of the opposite sides of the valley, which it otherwise would do in winter, (the great visiting time,) when the waters are swollen, it is crossed by many

little stone bridges—to say nothing of crossings formed in parts where it is shallowest, by stepping-stones—crossings infinitely preferred to any stone bridge whatever, by the children of the dale. Here, in hot weather, they may be seen, on their return from the school, dabbling about with their stockings and shoes off, catching fish, or hopping from stone to stone, and playing a hundred vagaries, any one of which would throw a city mother into hysterics.

Besides their small agricultural occupations, and the tending of their feathered and woolly flocks, the dales-people have another employment, which engrosses by far the greater portion of their time; this is knitting. Old men and young; women and children, all knit. The aged man, blind and decrepit, sits on the stone seat at the door, mechanically pursuing that employment, which seems as natural to his hands as breathing is to the lungs. The old woman, the parent of three generations, sits in the chimney-corner knitting, while she rocks, with her foot, the wooden cradle, in which lies the youngest-born of the family—the intermediate generations having their knitting likewise, which they take up and lay down as their daily avocations, whether in doors or out, require.

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The little intercourse the dales-people have with the rest of the world, makes them almost unconscious of the singularity of this employment. For aught they know to the contrary, although a rumour of railroads, and steam-carriages, and power-looms, and wove stockings, has reached them, all the rest of England knit as much as they. There still is a demand, at Kendal, for their goods—caps, stockings, jackets, and shirts; and, though every one says the trade was better in their father's time, they still go on knitting, contented in the belief that, while the world stands, stockings and caps will be wanted; and, consequently, that the dales-people will always be knitters. Such is Dent-dale, and such are its people.

CHAPTER II.

ANDREW LAW, HIS CHILDHOOD.

As much as half a century ago, there was, among the homesteads of Dent-dale, one which could not fail of being particularly remarked. Like the rest, it stood above the level of the valley, beside a gill, or little water-course, called—for each had its dis-

tinctive appellation, which gave name also to the homestead—Linn's Gill; and thence the place was called Linn's Gill. In most other cases, the proprietor would have taken his name also from his place; thus, he would have been Andrew o' Linn's Gill; or, as his father before him had been Peter o' Linn's Gill—Andrew o' Peter's o' Linn's Gill; that is Andrew, son of Peter, of Linn's Gill. But, from causes which will presently be fully understood, he was more frequently called Maister Law, or "the good Maister at Linn's Gill."

But we have not said why Linn's Gill, situated as it was, like most other dale houses, built of grey stone, and with a slated roof like them, would yet attract particular attention. It was its general air of neatness; its trim garden, with carefully-clipped box-edging; its well-kept white wooden paling in front; its cheerful doorway, which, whether open or shut, seemed to invite you to enter; its bright, though small-paned windows, which, like kind eyes in a pleasant countenance, bespoke all right within. Peter Law, the father of Andrew, was, like the rest of the dales-men, the tiller of a few acres, and the possessor of a large flock of sheep; but things had prospered so well with him, that

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he had, besides, his few hundreds in the bank, to which he made yearly additions, and became thus, in the eyes of his neighbours, a man of substance and consideration.

Peter o' Linn's Gill was a religious, grave man, and his wife was a fitting helpmate. He prided himself that he came of the stock of the martyrs; and the faithful account of that worthy ancestor who had perished in the flames for his religion, was penned, in small but careful caligraphy, in the fly-leaves of a large clasped Bible.

Peter Law had decided upon which of his few and distant connexions he should bestow his worldly possessions, and had made his will accordingly, when a son was born unto his own bosom. There was great rejoicing in the quiet hearts of Peter and Isabel Law over the child, whom they believed God had given them, to keep up, in their own line, the worthy race from whom they were sprung. Peter mounted his old horse, the day after the child's birth, and jogged quietly, and with thanksgiving in his soul, to the lawyer at Sedburgh, where he cancelled his former will, and disposed his worldly affairs in favour of this beloved new-comer.

"All in good time," said the lawyer, smiling at the old man's eagerness to endow a

new-born child, which the father confessed to be none of the strongest, with worldly goods which he might never live to possess. But Peter Law was the father of a living child, and his heart could only satisfy itself by bestowing upon it all it had to give.

“Weel, weel,” said Peter, in reply, “if the bairn dee, which Heaven forbid! nae man is the poorer for it; but while he leeves, nane sal have a claim upon his right!”

The child at Linn’s Gill was much less hardy than was common with the children of the dale. He was “fanted,” (coddled,) and too much cared-for, said the neighbour good-wives; and many a knitting company was edified by histories of the flannel wrappers in which the child lay; and it was told, how the old wooden cradle, painted mahogany without, and blue within, which Isabel Law had kept in her garret for many and many a year, had been brought down, lined with wadded flannel, and actually curtained in front, lest a breath of air should visit the child too roughly. It may be questioned whether there were not more of a malicious curiosity to see how the Laws were mismanaging the child, than of good-neighbourly regard, in the visits which the gossips so frequently paid to their fireside; and yet, be it

understood, that the dales-people were not more malicious than the rest of the world—they only marvelled at innovations, inasmuch as innovations were unheard of in Dent-dale. The knitting parties therefore, which, through the winter, circulated from house to house, made the Laws and their young child a constant theme of discourse; all the more so because, since the birth of little Andrew—for so he had been called—neither of the good people of Linn's Gill had mixed with their neighbours, as formerly. Other good-wives took their young children with them, and laid them to sleep among blankets and pillows, which never were wanting for the purpose, upon the wooden seat or settle within the chimney-corner, at whatever house the sitting for that night might be. It was an unheard-of thing to excuse herself, as Isabel Law did, on account of the child; it was like cutting the whole neighbourhood at once; and the neighbourhood, therefore, thought it could do no less than scrutinize all they did, and censure it likewise.

But, spite of prognostications, the child lived; and, though of a delicate frame, walked and talked all in due time, to the amazement of the whole dale; and, what was more, he was a child of uncommon beauty and pro-

mise. To the hearts of the parents he was as an angel come down from heaven; and of an evening, when he was asleep, they talked over all he had said and done through the day; wept together, in the fulness of their heart-joy; laid out a thousand plans for his future life; returned thanks to God for this last and best of his gifts; dedicated themselves anew to his service; and then slept, in the joyful consciousness that their soul's best beloved treasure lay sleeping at their side.

It was the father's wish to make his son a minister of Christ. Other men worked hard, merely to endow their sons with worldly wealth, for the spending; Peter Law grew almost avaricious, that he might have wherewithal to qualify his son for the high calling to which he had destined him. The neighbours ridiculed such schemes, and told how, instead of putting needles, or, as they called them, "pricks," into his hand, and teaching him to knit, and thereby to earn a few pence a week, as was only right, he was set down to his book, to spell out what nobody could understand, while his old father and mother worked as if their lives depended upon gaining a penny. It would come to no good, they declared; and it was a pity, for he was a

sweet bairn, and a clever one—the very exciseman and the schoolmaster never saw his fellow!

Spite, however, of all that neighbours said, everything went on propitiously for the wishes of Peter and Isabel Law; and the time came at last, the time of their sorrowful anticipation, when the young scholar was to leave home, for better instruction than his own fireside could afford him. He was sent, therefore, to Sedburgh Grammar School. Young Law, however, spent his Sundays with his parents; the old man duly setting forth with his cart, every Saturday afternoon, to meet him on his way; taking care, however, to meet him so near the town's end, that he had not far to walk. Sunday was indeed a hallowed day at Linn's Gill; and the good neighbours having established it in their own minds, that Peter and Isabel Law must even have their own way, odd as it was, began, seeing that things did not fall out conformably with their expectations, to alter their mode of thinking, from sheer self-love. Accordingly, every one now declared that they had foreseen something extraordinary in the child; and then they grew proud of him, as being one of themselves. They forgave his parents that they had absented themselves

from their evening "sittings," and that the child had grown up under a system and a tuition so unlike their own. In consequence, how Andrew Law had looked, and what he had said on the last Sunday, came to be matter of discourse through the ensuing week.

Till the birth of this child, Peter and Isabel Law had been, in appearance at least, but little superior to their neighbours. They had acquiesced in their prejudices; they had conformed to all their habits of life, if not of opinion; but afterwards, the higher qualities and characteristics of their natures had been called forth. They felt that the destinies of at least one immortal being were in their hands, and they received the trust as one of the utmost moment, and vowed themselves to the righteous fulfilment of their duties. From that time they were altered beings; the fountain of love which had been opened in their hearts, though it seemed for awhile to separate them from their neighbours, in reality only extended and deepened their sympathies. They loved the whole human family, in the image of their child.

Tell me not of the trim, precisely arranged homes where there are no children; "where," as the good German has it, "the fly-flaps

14 ANDREW LAW, HIS CHILDHOOD.

always hang straight on the wall;”—tell me not of the never-disturbed nights and days; of the tranquil, unanxious hearts, where children are not! I care not for these things. God sends children for another purpose than merely to keep up the race—to enlarge our hearts, to make us unselfish, and full of kindly sympathies and affections; to give our souls higher aims, and to call out all our faculties to extended enterprise and exertion; to bring round our fireside bright faces and happy smiles, and loving, tender hearts. My soul blesses the Great Father every day, that he has gladdened the earth with little children!

All this was felt in their heart of hearts, by the good people of Linn's Gill. From the day of little Andrew's birth Peter took a new interest in everything—in his garden, his home, his animals—for all had some reference to the child, or the child's happiness. While his age was yet only counted in weeks, the father thought of the time when he would toddle about and amuse himself in the garden and the fields; and hence, there was no garden, nor even any fields, so carefully kept in Dent-dale as those of Linn's Gill. The same principle also operated in the mother's heart. She loved her home,

because it contained her child, and was his birth-place: hence, there was no fireside so clean and cheerful, and no windows so bright and white-curtained, as theirs; for, always a good, notable housewife, as well as an excellent Christian, she felt, though she did not analyze her feelings, that the child's moral being would take its impress, in some degree, from common household things.

Such were the loving hearts that fostered the childhood of Andrew Law, and such was the home wherein he grew up to man's estate.

CHAPTER III.

ANDREW LAW AND ONE OF HIS SCHOLARS.

WE must now make a great advance in the time of our story, and, leaving Andrew Law in his childhood, return to him as a man of thirty. Only in one thing had Peter Law been disappointed in his son; he had not entered the church. He had been a poor scholar, it is true, at Cambridge, but he had not taken orders. His motives for declining, we are not, however, going to examine: and therefore now, instead of having the honour

of introducing him to our readers, either as vicar or rector, deacon or bishop, we must be content to make his farther acquaintance as the humble schoolmaster of Dent-dale. Having, therefore, just premised that Andrew's parents had now been dead a few years, we will not longer detain ourselves with preliminaries.

“Let me take the key, please maister!” said Johnny Swithenbank to Andrew Law, as, on an evening in October, they two stood at the school-house door, ready to walk together on their homeward way. “Let me take the key, please maister! and, as Molly Fearon is still so ill, I’ll sweep the school-room in the morning before ye come: I won’t lose the key;—and, please maister, I can sweep the floor and dust the desks,” continued he, seeing the master still hesitated.

“Can you?” said Andrew, kindly.

“Yes, indeed, sir,” replied Johnny, “I oft sweep the house at hame.”

“Well, you shall, my child,” said the master, and put the key into his hand, and then they walked on together.

Andrew Law loved the boy—he was his favourite scholar; and, with a glow of heart-

emotion, he grasped the little hand that held the key, till the pressure was painful. Johnny, however, said nothing, for he knew that his master loved him. He only quietly slipped the key into the other hand, and felt very happy.

"I have forgotten that specimen of campanula," said Andrew Law, suddenly stopping.

"I will fetch it for ye," said the scholar; "only tell me where it is; I have the key, ye knaw."

"It lies within my desk," said the master; "a dried flower, labelled and folded in writing-paper."

"I knaw it," returned the boy; and away he ran, while Andrew walked slowly forward. In less than five minutes he returned, and gave the dried specimen into his master's hand.

"Please, sir," said he, after a few moments' silence, "I should like to learn botany."

"And why not?" returned Andrew Law, "excepting that it is now too late for this season; but you shall begin with the new year."

"Thank ye," said the boy; "but I knaw a many flowers now, only with having walked so much with ye. What pleasant walks we

had in the lang days! I'm sorry winter's coming."

"Oh, but," said the master, smiling, "there is laking (playing) in the snow, and sliding, in winter."

"Yes, sir," said Johnny, but in a tone that did not evidence satisfaction.

"Then you don't like sliding and snow-balling?" asked the master.

"Yes, sir, I do," said Johnny; "but I like reading a deal better, and walking with ye better than all."

Andrew again took the boy's hand. "And what are you now reading?" asked he, after they had walked on a few moments in silence.

"I have finished the Iliad, and I am now reading the Odyssey;" and he took a little, old, worn copy out of the satchel he carried at his back, and opened its pages; "and I'm now reading about sailing past Scylla and Charybdis; and please, sir, there's a little Scylla and Charybdis in the beck."

"Is there?" asked the master.

"Down at Hell's Caldron," returned the boy; "I wish you would come and look at it sometime. Will you come to-night, maister?"

"Not to-night," replied the master; "but

there, now, run on and gather some blackberries for Tommy."

"Please, sir, I'll get some crabs for Gideon," said the boy; "he loves roasted crabs so: and we sal soon be at Green Well, where they grow so fine!"

"Do so," returned he; "be good and kind to poor Gideon, for he has but few pleasures; he cannot read like you, Johnny."

"No, sir," returned Johnny.

Gideon was a simple, harmless creature, his mother's cousin, who lived with them; and, as he was kind-hearted and gentle, though scarcely half-witted, the children were fond of him, and especially Johnny, who loved every living thing, but most what was weak and defenceless. When they came to Green Well, Johnny ran off, and, after he had gathered his cap half full, he rejoined the master, and they two walked on, till they reached the stile which led up from the road to Linn's Gill; and here the master stopped. The boy, who held the cap in his hand, stroked down his hair by way of bow, and bade his master good-night, adding, that he would be sure to get the school-room cleaned in the morning, before school-time. Andrew Law felt, he knew not wny, an unusual affection for the willing, obedient boy, and he called

him back to repeat his benediction—"God bless you, Johnny, and good-night!"

Still Andrew lingered at the stile, watching him as he went on, with quickened steps; and still he watched, till a distant ascent of the road again brought him in sight. Here he again gathered something from the hedge-trees; some redder, riper crabs, perhaps, thought the master, for poor Gideon; and, as he seemed to see the eager, up-turned face, and the little ink-stained hands, an unspoken blessing was warm in his heart. Higher up the valley, the river was again in sight, with a stepping-stone crossing, just above that wild part of the river called Hell's Caldron, which Johnny had mentioned. Andrew thought he would wait at the stile till he had seen him cross the stones, from which place the path to his father's house lay right up the fields, about as high on the opposite hill-side as Linn's Gill. But while the boy might be reaching this part of the road, the master's mind became occupied with years long gone by. It all came back to him, in a sort of golden sunshine—the time when he, too, was a boy, young, happy, and thoughtless, feeding his soul with the very aliment of love. Then the joy of all seasons at once came crowding before him; the green

spring-time, when the lambs were on the hills, which he went out with his father daily to number; the breezy freshness of the hill-tops; the careering showers that passed over, and the free, warm gushes of sunshine, which poured down between the edges of the spring-time clouds. He thought of the birds and the birds' nests, which he saw with admiring eyes, among the hard-stemmed ling of the fells, and in the hedges of the lower fields. The thought of the geese sitting to hatch under their little penthouses, and the broods of young, silky, yellow goslings, which were his mother's care and his own admiration; of the flowers of summer; the paddling in the rocky shallows of the beck; the hay-harvest; the sheep-washings, and the social sheep-shearings. What a heavenly garden of Eden seemed that sunny land of childhood, through which he had wandered; and in which now walked, gathering of its sweetest flowers, that child, for love of whom he had cast his thoughts thus backwards!

But the thought of the river, with its rocky shallows, recalled him to himself, and then he looked out to see if the small figure of the boy was to be seen at the river, which now shone out in the western sun-light. But he was not there; nor did he make his appear-

ance during the several minutes which the master remained looking out for him. He then recollected that he had been so completely absorbed, as to have taken no note of time, and he doubted not but he had reached his home long ere then. He therefore turned into his own path, picturing to himself how Johnny would be met, at his own door, by poor harmless Gideon, to whom the crabs would be so great a treasure; and how good Mrs. Swithenbank would set Johnny's porringer on the black oak table, ready for his supper, as soon as Gideon's quiet little chuckle announced his approach. Again that thought brought back his own childhood, when he, too, ever found the ready porringer on the black oak table, and his mother met him with a kiss, and stroked down his hair, after ever so short an absence. Something of the unselfish intensity of a parent's love had entered into his own heart, and he could now understand many an action, and many a motive, which lay far beyond the inexperience of a child; and though he could charge himself with no neglected duty, nor with any want of affection to his parents, while living, yet, now that the grave had closed over them for ever, he felt that there remained a debt of gratitude unpaid.

Andrew Law's was a kind and gentle spirit, and such thoughts as these fell heavy upon his heart; and, as he approached his own door, the thought of his solitary fireside spread an unwonted gloom over his countenance.

Yet Andrew's fireside was not quite solitary, for there was, as usual, the thrifty old woman whom, since his mother's death, he had established as his domestic care-taker. She had just laid down her knitting on the broad brick, which projected, slab-like, from the wall beside the fire, and was busied stirring up the fire on the hearth, as he entered, for she always began her operations as soon as she heard his step outside the door. The fire burned up cheerily, the kettle sung above it, and the little round stand, with the wooden tea-tray, was set out for the evening meal; yet still, Andrew Law felt unusually melancholy. "Why a! why a!" exclaimed the old woman, the first moment she cast her eyes to his face, "what ails ye, Maister Law? what bad news do ye bring?"

Andrew smiled, and assured her he had brought no news at all. She then told how the wool-buyers from Kendal had been in the dale, and how Dannel o' Foxcroft would not sell his wool, because he said it would rise in price; and how Christie o' Gibb's Ha'

had cleared off all his at the price that was offered. "And what will ye do with yours?" asked she, "for the woo-buyers will be here to morn."

Andrew's answer seemed to the old woman short-witted, and she replied, "Weel, weel, Maister Law, I knaw ye care neither for the buying nor the selling. Heaven help ye for a bairn in understanding! But ye'll like to hear what has happened to Matthey o' Rivelin?"

"And what has happened to him?" asked Andrew.

"Why, Matthey last night brought hame a young wife, out o' Garstel, all unknown to anybody—as bonny a lass as man would wish to gie his naeme tul; an a rare knitter!"

"Indeed!" said Andrew, roused at once into animation.

"Ay, and indeed!" returned the old woman, "Matthey's fireside, as ane may say, wanted warming. A dawley spot was the Rivelin, after the old folks' death, and Matthey did weel to bring a young wife tul it. A prime knitter is she! and a weel-grown, bonny woman into the bargain!"

"Matthey o' Rivelin kna's what's good for him," again pursued she, seeing Andrew relapsing into thought; "a varra weel-considering man is Matthey! He kna's that

winter neeghts are lang, and that twa par o' hands rid mair wark than ane. Ay, she's a bonny lass, and all Dent-dale is talking o' her. He met her at Sedbur' Fair, but he never thought it would ha been his luck to ha wed her, for she had foriver o' sweet-hearts! And Matthey has brewed a keg o' burtree-berry (elder-berry) wine, and has bought twa bottles o' red wine fro Sedbur', and has brewed twenty gallon o' strang drink. There'll be rare doings, I'll warrant them!"

Andrew Law, instead of questioning and cross-questioning the old woman, as he would have done had he not been naturally a silent man, sat imagining to himself all the happiness which would gather about his neighbour's fireside. The clean hearth; the bright fire; the cheerful, comely wife, always there to welcome him; the kindly dropping-in of neighbours, all sitting in a goodly circle, knitting and chatting the time away; the cordial glow of the crackling fire, warming the remotest corners of the house, and penetrating even to the back of the great wooden screen, pictured itself to his mind. Then, by a very natural reaction, his thoughts turned to himself, and he was not at all sure whether, spite of his superior knowledge, the balance of happiness was not on the side of his neigh-

hours. He did not knit, like them; and their "sittings," and their monotonous knitting-songs, and their dale-histories and country jokes, told over for the hundredth time, however delightful to them, had no interest for him; but then, the picture of his own fireside was not very alluring;—the fire low and ashy; the lamp untrimmed, and himself sitting, cold and solitary, with an open book before him, turning page after page, and reading, to be sure, yet with a void in his heart, which warm, generous, and unselfish love might very comfortably fill. He again thought of the little boy whom he had parted from on the road, and he wished he could make even that child the companion of his home.

Such were Andrew Law's thoughts, when the old woman, who was tired of so untalkative a companion, rolled up her knitting, without even getting to the middle of the seam-needle. She then put on her cloak and bonnet, and, lest the moon should be down on her return, took the lantern under her cloak, and walked out, to pass the evening with more companionable people than Maister Law; "wha," muttered she to herself, between the house door and the garden gate, "is a poor, maundering cretur, Heaven help him! for a' he's a gert scholar!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE EVENT OF AN EVENING.

WHILE Andrew Law sat pondering on many things, with a large, open book before him, from which, however, he never read a word; and while his old housekeeper was sitting in the midst of a knitting-company, and was edifying them with a history of Maister Law's melancholy housekeeping, which operated as a foil to the merry fireside of the Riveling, where the bride, it was said, had already challenged to a knitting-match, any three of the best knitters in the dale; this while, good old Joshua Gilsland, a Moravian of Sedburgh, was driving homeward, from Settle, in a one-horse-chaise which he had hired, with a young kinswoman—Dorothea Zelter by name. Dorothea was the orphan daughter of missionary parents, who had died in South Africa, about six months before, leaving this, their only child, to the loving care of their English relative. They had met, for the first time, this day at Settle, and were now on their way homeward, but at a pace so slow, that it was doubtful if they could get further than Dent-town that night. As they approached that wilder part of the dale, where

the river flows through the Caldron, they were startled by the uneasy howling of a dog, the sound of which came up, dolefully mingling with the rushing and tumbling of the vexed and turmoiled waters.

As they advanced upon the spot, the animal sprung from the wilderness of trees and bushes, which grew on the rocky margin of the stream, and endeavoured, by all means in its power, to attract the notice of the strangers. It whined, and barked, and howled most piteously, and then ran towards the water. Its actions were not to be misunderstood; and the old man, giving the reins to his companion, followed the dog, which appeared overjoyed at his acquiescence. Having passed, not without difficulty, through the wildly-grown trees and brushwood of the river-side, he found himself on the immediate edge of a black abyss, which, in the uncertain shadowyness of the scene, appeared of vast depth, and, rising out of which, he could descry huge misshapen masses of stone, white and ghastly in the moonlight, while the roaring and rushing of the pent-up waters below, told it to be a place of no common danger. But good Joshua Gilsland had lived too long in the self-forgetting performance of Christian duty,

lightly to shrink from danger; and, hoping he might yet be in time to save life, he merely paused till he had assured himself of his footing, and then followed to the spot at which the dog made a stand, again howling, and again looking down into the stream. Fortunately, this spot lay in the full light of the moon, and the aged man could now, very distinctly, perceive a dark object lying in the still water of a sort of little pool, or rather huge rock basin in the hollow of a rock; in fact, called by the dales-people "the font," from an ideal resemblance to that object. That it was the body of a child, the good man had instantly no doubt; of a child, who had probably fallen in, face downward, while playing or scrambling about these wild rocks of the river. His clothes were scarcely under water; and, by lying down upon the rock, and leaning over the edge of it, with the help of his strong staff he managed to raise the body sufficiently to take hold of the shoulder and lift it out. Alas! good man, he knew not the burden of sorrow that he had lifted out of the pitiless water!

"Poor, dear lamb!" groaned he, as he turned the face into the moonlight, and saw the fair, meek countenance, and the drip-

ping locks; "poor, dear lamb! God has taken thee to his own bosom!"

The dog, who all this time had shown the utmost joy at the recovery of the body, leaped and barked, and ran forward, to indicate what path they were to take, when a stout countryman, at the very moment when Joshua Gilsland was considering what had best be done, made his way up to the spot. It was Matthew Fothergill, otherwise Matthey o' Rivelin, who, passing along the road, had heard from Dorothea Zelter of the cause which had taken her companion to the water-side, and had now come to render what help might be needful.

"It's Christie o' Gibb's Ha's dog!" said he, as the creature bounded towards him, recognising him at the same time, "and, as I live, this is Johnny Swithenbank! Poor lile bairn! and his bag o' books at his back!" said he, stooping down and gently raising the body. "But what did he here? this was no his way hame. He had na business here!" added he, impatiently.

"It was the Lord's will!" remarked the old man: "life and death are alike in his hands."

It was then arranged that the body should

be removed to Joshua Gilsland's chaise; and, while they with their melancholy burden took the cart-road to Gibb's Ha', which would oblige them to go half a mile round, in order to cross the river by the bridge, Matthey o' Rivelin should take the shorter foot-road, and prepare the family for their coming.

"Hae ye seen our Johnny to-neeght?" asked the good wife of Gibb's Ha', as she stood at her garden-gate, from Matthey o' Rivelin, while he was yet many paces from her. "Hae ye seen our Johnny?" repeated she, as Matthew was slow to answer.

"He's coming," was the neighbour's reply, at length.

"For what's he been staying? Not laking by the way, for sure; or has the Maister kept him in?"

"He'll soon be here," was the good neighbour's reply, but with that tremor of voice which prepared the mother for some intelligence of sorrow. When sorrow enters a house, how soon is its arrival felt! Even the footsteps of Matthey o' Rivelin, as he crossed the threshold, were as intelligible as the tolling of a knell.

"Some ill has happened him! Christie, go

for th' Doctor!" said Mrs. Swithenbank to her husband, who, with Tommy, the younger child, on his knee, was "supping his porridge" in the warm fire-light.

"Ye needn't go, Christie!" said Matthew, in a half whisper to the father, feeling that he could communicate the ill news better to him than to the mother. But the mother's ear caught the words, if not their full import. "Needn't he!" exclaimed she; "then, if he is na ill hurt, why not tell us sae at aince?—But oh, no!" added she, with a shrill scream the moment after, as Matthew's countenance interpreted his silence, "he's de-ad! he's de-ad! Oh my bairn! my bairn!"

Nothing could now equal the alarm and distress of the whole household; and poor Gideon, who had been asleep in the warm corner of the settle, and was awoke by the scream of the mother, was the only one, beside Matthew, who might be called calm. But poor Gideon was only calm because intelligence was received slowly and imperfectly into his clouded mind; and when Matthew called him aside and said, "Gideon, my man, run down to Maister Law, and bid him come here directly, Gideon silently rose and took down his old hat, wondering what

all this meant, and then, fixing his eyes on Matthew, stood as if he had forgotten, or failed to comprehend his mission.

“Tell him,” said Matthew, drawing him outside the door, and speaking very distinctly, “tell him that lile Johnny’s drowned, and he must come up here.”

Poor Gideon’s few faculties were affections, and the communication became at once fearfully intelligible. “Oh Johnny! Johnny!” cried he, with a voice of anguish that thrilled the heart of the stout dalesman, “Oh the dear bairn! Oh the lile bairn! Johnny! Johnny!”

“Run down, my man,” said Matthew, fearing that Gideon’s distress would disable him from executing his wishes, “run down and tell the Maister to come and see if he can bring Johnny to life!”

The false hope was enough to wing the poor creature to his utmost speed, and in a few moments neither the sound of his lamentations nor his footsteps were to be heard.

After Gideon was despatched upon his errand, Matthew returned to the house, whence he and Christian Swithenbank proceeded, by the longer road, to meet Joshua Gilsland and the body.

CHAPTER V.

ANDREW LAW'S HOUSEHOLD.

IT was in this house of mourning that Andrew Law first saw Dorothea Zelter. In the midst of the intense anguish of that terrible time, when he saw the child he loved so well, and from whom he had so lately parted, lying dead before him: when the cap, half filled with crabs, which had been found near the water, was brought in; and the bag of books laid on the table, and the key taken from his pocket—with every one of which some association of love and obedience was connected, and entwined, as it were, with the strings of his heart; when, in the tumult of his grief, he groaned forth, “The Lord hath given and the Lord hath taken,” yet failed to say, “Blessed be his name”—even then he was conscious of a calm and heavenly countenance that beamed upon him, as it did on the other mourners, like an angel sent from heaven to bless and comfort them.

There are some whose mission in this world is love—who are sent from the throne of the Merciful, to administer mercy, and, like the blessed Saviour, whose disciples they emphatically are, to take the sting out

of sorrow and death. Such was Dorothea Zelter.

Andrew Law, who had ideas of female gentleness and grace superior to any reality which Dent-dale could produce, saw instantly that this young stranger, with her meek, Madonna-like beauty, her pity, her sympathy, and her Christian spirit, was the realization of all his dreams. Now he saw her weeping over the dead body of the child; now composing the sweet features to their everlasting repose, and now laying the small palms together on his breast. Now he heard her speaking such heavenly words of consolation to the heart-broken parents, as Christ himself might have uttered, and now soothing the younger child, who, terrified and half conscious of the presence of death, clung weeping, and refusing to be comforted, to the bosom of his mother, till, laid in the arms of Dorothea, he became pacified, nor would thence be removed, as if he felt that to be with her was to be full of assurance and peace. No wonder was it that Andrew Law blended together sweet thoughts of the dead and the living!

Need we say more to prepare our readers for the next event of our story? We think not.

Before the winter had fairly set in, An-

drew Law had such a companion by his fireside, as made him no longer think, with a feeling almost akin to envy, of the social gatherings, and the glowing fire, which warmed even behind the screen, at the Rivelin. The fireside at Linn's Gill was yet more happy, for Dorothea Zelter was the presiding spirit there. Her former life, spent among half-civilized people, and holy Christian men and women—a life of virtue, yet of sorrow, furnished engrossing conversation for many an hour. How delightful it was to hear her tell of those far foreign countries, with all their new aspects and productions—but still more, of her parents; till her husband felt, in the living description she gave of their persons, their way of life, and their affection for her, as if he too had known and loved them! Dorothea's parents had so named her, because she was indeed to them *the gift of God*; how much more did she seem so to the desolate heart and hearth of good Andrew Law!

The dales-people, who looked upon themselves as a little community all-sufficient for itself, would have resented any other of its young men bringing in a *foreign* wife—for all people dwelling beyond the range of the dales were called *foreigners* by them. Even

a wife brought from the town of Kendal, where they had dealings, was almost an unheard-of thing; but this marrying a stranger, a woman born beyond seas, would have been high crime and misdemeanour, had any other than Andrew Law committed it. But Andrew was a privileged person: he had been unlike them from his youth upwards; and, though his marriage made a great talk, none took offence; or, if they did take offence, they had only to look on the sweet, gentle countenance of Dorothea, and they straightway forgave it. And, besides this, the holy purity of her demeanour, and the gentle playfulness of her conversation, every word of which was a sentiment of religion and love, together with the rumours of the strange, foreign land whence she had come, and of her dead missionary parents, made them regard her as a being of a different and superior race. They revered her; and reverence is but love in another shape.

The sods had grown green on little Johnny Swithenbank's grave, and his mother had put aside, in one of the black, carved, oaken chests which belong to all dale-houses, her Sunday mourning, there to lie, among blankets and home-spun table-linen, till some future death again brought it into wear. The

second Christmas was at hand, and a family event of great interest was looked forward to at Linn's Gill.

It was now Christmas eve; the whole valley lay in a vesture of deep snow, which had gradually accumulated for a week, and had become hard and crisp, by nightly frosts, through that time. All nature was calm as a child's sleep, and the stars shone brightly overhead in a sky of intense blueness. But every fireside was a festival; and, had any traveller passed along the dale-road, he would not have failed to remark how, from every homestead on the hill-sides, lights shone, giving token of the good fellowship within. Within there were holly in every window-pane, and ivy and mistletoe depending from every ceiling. Neighbour was met with neighbour; scattered branches of families were collected together; and, for once, the knitting was laid aside for the "Christmas bread," and the brimming cups of "Christmas drink," which every fireside produced.

At the fireside of Linn's Gill there sat, that night, three people—Andrew Law, and his wife, and their good neighbour Alice Swithenbank o' Gibb's Ha'. There was no fireside in the dale brighter and cleaner than that: the fire went roaring up the wide

chimney, from the hearth, where a huge Christmas-log was burning, and the bright blaze was reflected in the pewter dishes which stood on the dresser shelves, on the opposite side of the room; there was sweet spiced-bread, and ale on the table, and red-berried holly in the window. The two women had a shallow basket between them, and were arranging sundry little garments, while a new wicker cradle, with its new little bedding and blankets, was airing in one warm chimney corner. Andrew Law sat in the other, with his fingers between the pages of the Gospel of St. Luke, where he had been reading of what happened in the little town of Bethlehem, more than eighteen hundred years ago.

The next morning, when the dales-people were wending their way to their parish church in Dent-town, all were busy talking of the news—how a child was born at Linn's Gill; and Nelly, the buxom wife of Rivelin, who chanced to have called there early in the morning, declared it to be "a bonny bairn, the vara pictur o' its mother."

The birth of Andrew himself had been a joyful event; but still more joyful was the birth of this child; nor could the hearts of the parents conceive anything wanting to crown

the abundance of their blessing. Never had a child seemed so beautiful to the eyes of its parents as did this; and, in the fulness of their joy, as well as after Dorothea's father, they named him Felix.

The Christmas holidays closed, and Andrew resumed his school duties; and, though Dorothea's recovery was slow, she once more went about her household work; yet, whatever they did, the blessed consciousness was still with them, that they were the parents of a child given them by God.

One thing, and one only, dimmed the happiness at Linn's Gill. Dorothea's health began to fail. Andrew, the most affectionate of human beings, watched her with a love that never was surpassed; but the truth was too strong to be denied; and yet, hope is the sheet-anchor of love, and so Andrew still hoped, spite of his fears. But the talk of the dales-people was, that the young mother at Linn's Gill was not long for this world.

"Methinks, dear husband," said Dorothea, one fine balmy Sabbath evening in May, as she and Andrew, with the child in his arms, were beguiled out, and rambled down the river side, towards that wilder part which had been fatal to poor Johnny Swithenbank, "Methinks God nullified the curse

by making children dependent on their parents' love. Eve's best earthly blessing, as it seems to me, lay outside the gates of paradise."

Andrew felt that his wife's words were true, and held the child still closer to his bosom. "And yet," he replied, half repelling the thought, as treason to his own boy, "her first born was Cain."

"Alas!" sighed Dorothea, "yet was not her love the less;—but why speak you of Cain, with that beloved one in your arms?"

"This beloved one," replied Andrew, cheerfully, in the words of the fine old carol, "was born on Christmas day in the morning."

"And was God's gift at that blessed time—a token of his dear love to us," replied Dorothea.

The evening was yet more delicious as they advanced up the valley, for, as the sun neared the horizon, the whole flood of its light was poured into the valley from an opening between the hills. The tender green of the budding trees looked yet more transparent, and the pale, starry tufts of primroses below, seemed like friendly faces looking upward from the earth, full of love and joy.

The blackbird and the throstle sang their sweetest songs, while the fall and rush of the river, in its troubled passage through the Hell's Caldron, sent forth a deep undertone, which mellowed every other sound, and harmonized with the scene.

It was one of those delicious Sabbath evenings when the rest of the hallowed time seems to fill all nature, and strikes deep into the human breast, like a sentiment of religion.

"I know not why it should be so," said Dorothea, "but the whole course of my earlier life seems at once brought before me. I feel as if the Sabbaths of my childhood were all centred in this one time, and as if I almost expected to hear my father's voice addressing his swarthy people under the shade of the palm-trees, and felt my mother's arm on my shoulder, as she pointed out the hymns, in that rich, wild tongue in which the native people sang praises to God! How strange! and I wake as from a dream, and find myself here, with thee, my beloved, and that dear child!"

Andrew Law looked into his wife's face, and saw that her eyes were full of tears. "Why are you sad, Dorothea?" asked he.

"Andrew," replied she, solemnly, "I will open my heart to you—I know that I have not long to live."

Andrew stopped abruptly, and looked at his wife, but said nothing, for his heart was too full; it was the first time Dorothea had spoken of her own death.

"I would fain live," continued she, "if so were the will of Heaven, for your sake and the child's; but it may not be. Thoughts of death, dearest husband, are with me night and day; and these strange visions of the past, this hearing and seeing my father and mother, come often, and can only be a heavenly token to prepare me for death. Yet be not broken-hearted, dearest husband," continued she, seeing Andrew utterly overcome by her words, "He who ordains this affliction, will strengthen us to bear it. And he has strengthened me; for I have feared it long; and night and day have prayed that this cup might pass from us; but it may not be. It is His will that we drink it, and a spirit of submission will be given!"

Dorothea's presentiment was true. The best medical aid was procured; but, though she was attacked by no decided malady, her illness was beyond the skill of physicians. As the summer came on, she gradually wasted

away; yet, as her strength decayed, the clear light of her heavenly spirit became more conspicuous.

It was a touching thing, to see this fair young mother preparing future clothing for her child, over which many a natural tear was shed; and, as it was finished, all laid carefully by, that, when she was mouldering in the grave, he might be wearing tokens of her forethought and love. But why should we prolong a melancholy part of our narrative? Dorothea Law died on the seventh of July, in the twenty-third year of her age, and was buried in a spot of her own choosing, in a sunny part of the churchyard of Dent-town.

CHAPTER VI.

A REMOVAL.

IF the fireside of Linn's Gill had seemed melancholy, after the death of the good old people, how much more must it have become so, after the death of Dorothea! It is impossible to tell the desolation of heart that then fell upon poor Andrew Law; and, though the whole dale sympathized with him, and many and many a kind neighbour-wife

volunteered to take charge of the child, he rejected all offers of help and pity. It was then hay-harvest, and consequently the long summer holidays, and he spent every moment of his time in caring for his child. It slept in his bosom by night, and was his only comfort and companion through the day. To the good dales-people all this appeared like insanity; and as he, with his melancholy countenance and slow steps, passed them in the road, cradling the child in his arms, they stopped and looked after him with expressions of pity and wonder. "The Maister is clean daft," said they, "poor soul! and yet the bairn thrives!"

And so it did. Andrew was the best of nurses; and wisely indeed had he taken upon himself this engrossing charge, for it furnished him with a perpetual object of interest: and though he often wept bitter tears when the child smiled upon him, or when he pressed his cheek with his soft little hand, yet the time at length came when he smiled also, and felt that, in the mirth of the child, he could even forget his own sorrow.

Poor Andrew Law, however, was never after the man he had been; and the whole dale was again amazed and scandalized, when he made it known that a new schoolmaster

might take his place, for he should not, henceforth, teach again. "What is he boun' to do?" asked many a dalesman, knowing that hitherto he had not looked much after his acres, and, moreover, that he could not knit. "What is he boun' to do?" But Andrew, this while, had his own plans, which, after due consultation with the good people of Gibb's Ha', were carried into effect.

Andrew knew, as well as his neighbours, that he had no turn for the management of land, nor for the keeping of flocks, whether sheep, geese, or ponies; and, though his home at Linn's Gill was hallowed by the memory of Dorothea, yet, for the child's sake, he determined to leave it, and become the inmate of some other family, where, though he would not give up the charge of the little Felix, he might have an experienced, matronly woman near him, to counsel with, if need were. The rent of Linn's Gill he knew would be sufficient for their maintenance. And thus matters were arranged; and the next news in the dale was, that Andrew Law and the child had, in dale-phrase, "taken the house-end at Gibb's Ha;" that is, that the little parlour at Gibb's Ha', with the chamber over it, were allotted for their use.

Mrs. Swithenbank, good woman, was well

pleased with this arrangement, for she had no doubt but Andrew would instruct her two boys, seeing he was so fond of Johnny; and thus the family would be benefited by the saving of school-wage; "to say naething," observed her husband, when this thrifty consideration was mentioned to him, "o' his paying a penny a-week to th' newspaper, and reading it out into th' bargain." A matter of no small moment that, for Andrew read remarkably well, while poor Christian Swithenbank spelt or guessed at every fourth word.

The dales-people, who thought it their duty, as we have before said, to pass judgment on the movements of any of their community, and who had the best opportunities in the world for so doing, at their winter evening sittings, and their summer harvestings and sheep-shearings, saw nothing to disapprove of in this junction of the households of Linn's Gill and Gibb's Ha'. "Naething could be mair likely," said they, seeing that Alice o' Christie's, (that was, Christian Swithenbank's wife,) was the only dales-woman Mrs. Law had ever been intimate with. It was on the night of Johnny's death, that she and Andrew had first met; Alice o' Christie's had been with her at the birth of her child, when, Mrs. Law being a foreigner,

with all sort of new-fangled notions, had objected to the regular custom of “a shout,” (that was, a gathering of the good wives on the occasion,) and had contented herself with Mrs. Swithenbank; whereby, to be sure, her wife-day, (or second Sunday after the child’s birth, when she sate to receive company,) had been lightly attended, and the child, in consequence, had few presents. Moreover, Mrs. Swithenbank had been with her at her death, and had been, at the laying of her out, and seen the shroud she herself had made; and had had the overlooking of her clothes—certainly unknown to her husband—and been able, thereby, to make known how she had cut up her own linen, (and such linen, to be sure, as had never been seen in Dent-dale,) to make future under-garments for the child, one size after another—and so beautifully made—so that he would not want for years. All this was known to Alice Swithenbank, who had, besides, been shown, by poor Dorothea herself, two oil portraits of her parents, done by a Dutch artist; and sundry habiliments of a foreign fashion, which had been worn by them, and some ancient china and plate, of a quality and fashion unknown in Dent-dale; together with good store of beautiful house-linen; all of

which, she said, was kept carefully under lock and key, in a large foreign-looking chest, which stood at Dorothea's bed's head. Such being the degree of intimacy which subsisted between the two wives of Linn's Gill and Gibb's Ha', nothing could be more proper than that Andrew, now he was bereaved of his wife, and left with that young child, should take the house-end, and thus become an inmate of the family.

"Naething could be mair likely," was universally decided, at the great sheep-shearing supper at the Rivelin, when this affair was, of course, talked over. And then it was told, how some had seen Christie's cart fetching Andrew Law's goods and chattels, which, however, were only few in number—a bed, a cradle, and sundry chests and oaken presses, being the principal—to say nothing of his books, which, though in the estimation of the scholar very few in number, were a library, in the eyes of the dales-people; and the two oil portraits, which were now inestimable treasures, because he traced a resemblance to his wife in both of them. And then another related, how poor Andrew himself, with the infant in his arms, had been seen going out of the house for the last time, and how he had returned three several times, as

if he had forgotten something, but it was only in the grief of leaving the old place where he had been born, and where his wife had died. Others then told how he had been seen at his wife's grave in the twilight, and all attested that there never had been such a couple in the dale, and that it was a thousand pities she had died; for, though she was a foreigner, and had many new ways of her own, she never had any one's ill word. It was, indeed, a thousand pities, for poor Maister Law would never hold up his head again; that he was quite another man now; that it was a great misfortune to the dale, his giving up the school; and that, had he not gone to live with such a comfortable, well-doing family as that of Christie o' Gibb's Ha', he might have been found dead in his bed some morning, or have maundered about, with that baby in his arms, till he had no more wit left than poor Gideon himself.

It was in the autumn that Andrew Law removed himself to Gibb's Ha'. Alice Swithenbank, who was a kind-hearted neighbourly woman, anticipated very great advantage from her new inmate. Although she acknowledged him for a prodigious scholar, and had formerly stood in awe of him, she had been on such friendly terms with him

since poor Johnny's death, as to have outgrown the fear of his learning. She thought only now, how he would be always at hand to talk with, when the good man was from home, and how he would sit in the chimney-corner, of a night, and perhaps take to knitting quite kindly; "and, if he would only do that," said she, to her favourite gossip, Nelly o' Rivelin, "why, then he would soon get the better of all his trouble, for it was wonderful how soon sorrow left the heart when the pricks (knitting needles) were in the fingers."

But good Alice o' Gibb's Ha' reckoned without her host; and it must be confessed that she felt herself ill used when Andrew lit the fire in his little parlour; placed the cradle within reach of its warmth; undressed the infant himself; rocked it to sleep, and then lit his candle and sat down to his book; "as if," said the good wife to her husband, that same night, on his return from Settle Fair, "we were nane o' us good enough for his company."

Had Andrew called upon Alice Swithenbank every hour in the day, for hand-help and for counsel, and had he required her to dress and feed the child, she would have been much better pleased, than by this inde-

pendence of all help. To find him up in the morning as early as herself, with the baby dressed, and fed, and wrapped in his poor mother's cloak, ready to go out in the open air; to ask nobody to carry him out, nor even to hold him in their arms; to take his meals with him on his knee!—it was a thing beyond anybody's experience; and, for aught she could see, he might just as well have remained by himself at Linn's Gill! Poor Mrs. Swithenbank, she was indeed dissatisfied and displeased. Andrew Law all this time never dreamed of giving offence, nor, so much was he occupied by his own cares, would he have become aware of having done so at all, had not she at last made it known to him.

“I niver could hae thought, Maister Law,” she said, “that ye would hae used us sae ill! I canna bide sic wark, Maister! na’ I will n’t!”

“My good Alice!” remonstrated Andrew, in astonishment.

“Yes, Maister,” she continued, “one might think we care as little for ye as ye care for us!”

“How have I offended?” inquired Andrew, in so mild a voice that Alice felt reproved by it.

“Why a! now,” said she, “I’d like to help ye wi’ th’ bairn; its nae a man’s work, Maister Law, to be always dandling a babby!”

“Alice!” said he, laying his hand on her arm, and with an expression of countenance that touched her to the heart, “the child’s mother is dead!”

“O Maister!” was Alice’s reply.

“And I am,” continued he, “in the place of father and mother too. I am not skilled in husbandry, like good Christie and Matthey o’ Rivelin; and, as to the school—alas!” sighed he, “when I lost *her*, I found that I had too much to learn, to be able to teach. What, then, can I do, better than devote myself to the child?”

“O Maister!” exclaimed Alice, with tears in her eyes, “ye maun think nought at it. I’se wae I said ought. I sal niver forgive mysel!”

“You have meant kindly,” replied he, combating his own emotion, “but let it not displease you that I continue to care for the child myself. Heaven grant that I may never want your better experience. You have known affliction, Alice,” continued he, “and we have wept together under this very

roof; let us not, then, judge hardly of one another!"

Poor Alice was more angry with herself than she had ever been before; but this little misunderstanding and explanation made them better friends than ever. That very evening Andrew came out of his own parlour, and volunteered to read the paper to the good man and his wife; and Alice, touched by this concession on his part, tapped her little keg of elder wine, and, late as it was for such an operation, made half a dozen kettle cakes, with currants in them, to signalize the evening.

Andrew himself felt happier that night, than he had done since his wife's death. He had made others happy, and he was astonished to find, when he went to bed, that he had sat up an hour later than common. From that night he often sat with the family: "it was a saving o' candle-light to him," suggested the good housewife, willing to make it appear that he was not without an advantage in his condescension; and thenceforward he always read the newspaper aloud. From its being a favour now and then for him to sit by their fireside, it at length became a habit; and with him his books also were

transferred: and here was the greatest blessing of all; for, to their inexperienced minds, every book was full of delightful novelties. Mrs. Swithenbank declared so much knitting had never been done of a night before. So said every neighbour that came in; and it was not long before Christie o' Gibb's Ha's fireside became the most popular one in the dale; for all discovered that "the Maister's books were worth a' th' knitting sangs as iver were made."

CHAPTER VII.

FELIX LAW.

THUS things went on very amicably for five years, and little Felix Law, the happiest boy in Dent-dale, was a prodigy in the eyes of all. He knew as much as an old man, said they; and he was so docile and affectionate besides, and had such "pretty ways of his ain, that nane o' th' seven dales could find his fellow." "Bless his bonny face!" said one good wife. "He minds me o' him that's gane, o' my Richard that died o' th' chin-cough," said another; and, "he's the bravest bairn that sets fute in shoe-leather,"

said a third. Even old Dannel o' Foxcroft, the surliest man, and the miser of the dale, expanded his crumpled-up face whenever he saw him, and, on one particular May morning, when he was gathering cowslips in Dannel's own croft, had made him a present;—true it was only of a puppy, but then Dannel had never before, in the whole course of his life, been known to give away even a dog. But Felix found favour in all eyes, and many of his little acts and deeds circulated up and down the dale, and even into Dent-town itself.

Among other things, it was told that, as Christie and Alice sat by the fireside weeping, with their untasted supper of oatmeal porridge standing between them, because Christie's old mother, to whom he was much attached, was dead, Felix had gone, without saying a word to any one, and, standing on his little chair, had reached down the New Testament, and had read to them the 14th Chapter of St. John; then closed the book and replaced it on the shelf. "The parson could ha' done nae mair," said Alice, as she related the circumstance, "nor could the Maister himsel; and as soon as our Christie heard it, he wiped his eyes and took comfort, and eat a varra good supper;—as

for me," said she, "I'se sure it only made me greet the mair: it was sae strange to see a bairn hae sae much consideration!"

Nothing could be happier than the early life of Felix Law. His father was his daily companion, and the affection between the two was extreme. Andrew Law, though living upon only forty pounds a year, the rent of his little patrimony, yet, having no daily labour to perform, was looked upon as a sort of independent gentleman; and, in his rambles over the hills, and into the neighbouring dales, he and the child were welcomed at every fireside. Andrew botanized, and studied several branches of natural history; and Felix, like little Johnny, learned a deal only from being his daily companion: but then he had an advantage which Johnny had not—the whole business of Andrew's life was to instruct him.

No wonder was it, therefore, that he became such a paragon of learning. He could run over a list of hard Latin and Greek names, and know what all meant, as readily as he could count twenty, while Tommy and Ralph, the two elder boys at Gibb's Ha', could not master even the first syllables, much more remember them.

"Ah!" their mother would say, "if poor

lile Johnny had but leaved, he would hae matched him, any how;—but the Maister has lost the knack o’ teaching, poor man, since his wife died.” Old Peggy Hibbledon, Alice’s great-aunt, who lived at Garstthrop (in a neighbouring dale,) and with whom the boys often were, used to say, however, that “nae good would come of it,” and “that, for her part, she thought much better o’ th’ man who, out of doors, would drive th’ cart, and tae the pricks (knit) within, than of him who pulled up roots and weeds, like th’ Maister, and gave them queer names, and sat by th’ fireside *sweeling* (wasting) th’ candle wi’ wafting the leaves o’ a big book!”

This was Peggy Hibbledon’s philosophy; and, as she had a little farm, and some money beside, which she could leave to whomsoever she liked, good Mrs. Swithenbank was contented that Tommy should remain a dunce, and that Ralph should take his own time about his learning, seeing that “the Maister had turned gentleman, and the new school-maister was no great hand at teaching!”

But now I grieve at heart,
That I have pain and sorrow to impart.

But truth must be told. Perhaps, like

good Mrs. Swithenbank herself, our readers have never guessed, that while Andrew Law was teaching his child, "death was o'er him stealing." But so it was; and the good wife was only made fully aware of the fact, by questioning Felix why his father went once a-week to Sedburgh. From him she learned that his father went to the doctor; and that, the last time he had been there, the doctor had felt his pulse, and shook his head, and looked very solemn; that his father was often very grave and sorrowful, when they were together alone, and often kissed him without speaking; that he did believe his father was ill, for that he never went now into Swaledale, nor Garsdale, nor even into Barbindale, where it was so wild and beautiful, and where they saw the wild ponies and foxes; and that he stopped many times, if he only took a short walk; and his cough was very bad at night. Mrs. Swithenbank knew that; but as Andrew had never complained, she had thought no more of it. But now that her attention was called to him particularly, she remarked that he really looked ill, and she wondered at herself for never noticing how little he ate now-a-days. "But to be sure," said she, in self-excuse, "I'se sae mony things to look after, and the Maister niver

takes it weel that anybody mel's wi' his concerns; so nae wonder I didn't see it: but if he really is ill," continued she, "we must see to it, for it would be nae joke having th' bairn left on our hands."

"As to that," replied her husband, who kept a sharp look after the main chance, "Linn's Gill would make it worth anybody's while to keep th' lad. But still, ye must look after th' Maister; I would na hae it said he was ill done by under my roof."

Accordingly, that same evening, when Andrew took his seat on the settle, with the Pilgrim's Progress in his hand, which he was then reading, both the dalesman and his wife were struck with his apparent feebleness; and Alice began to apologize and explain, for she really felt as if she had neglected her duty towards him.

"Make yourself easy, my good Alice," replied he, "I blame you not; but since you have spoken, know, then, that my disease is one which medicine cannot cure."

"O, Maister Law," said she, "ye must na be cast down. Please the Lord, ye'll mend as summer comes on."

"Ye'd better hae th' doctor," said Christie; "I'll fetch him mysel, Maister, with all th' pleasure in life! Or you'd mappen (may

happen) take Peggy Hibbledon's advice; she's a rare knowledge o' physic and salves; and that would be much cheaper, Maister Law."

"Thank you, my friend," returned Andrew, scarcely concealing a smile, "but Peggy Hibbledon would be of little use, and the doctor, I have consulted."

"Weel, weel," replied Christie; "but one's natterally frightened—there's th' lad, ye know."

Andrew did not need reminding of that; and, after his countenance had undergone a momentary change, he said—

"Perhaps, Christie, no time might be better than the present, to say what must be said before long;" and, laying down the book, and going out of the room and into his chamber, he returned again in a few minutes, with a folded paper, tied round with red tape, in his hand. In the meantime Alice and her husband had resumed their knitting, which, for a short time, had been suspended, and Andrew took his seat as before.

"I have taught the boy," he began, "all one so young could learn, and, especially, have I taught him obedience. He will not be much trouble to you, Alice!"

"O dear, no!" said Alice, and laid down her knitting—"niver was such a bairn!"

"You will still let him live with you," continued Andrew—"you will be a mother to him!"

"Yes," said she, putting her apron to her eyes, "as to my own bairn!" and Christie's knitting went on faster than ever.

"I know you will," repeated Andrew; "you will accept him in the place of him who is gone!"

"Sure, sure!" replied she, sobbing, and giving her hand to him, in token of assurance.

"Ay!" said Christie, "a mouthful o' me-at or o' porridge he sal niver want!"

"It is enough," said Andrew, taking up the folded paper, which he had laid beside him, and which Christie knew to be a will that he had witnessed some months before. "The nature of this you know," said Andrew. "The rent of Linn's Gill will be yours, in compensation for the needful costs of the child, till he shall be of age sufficient to manage his own affairs. But remember this, Christie—So long as Mikky Hawes will give as much rent for Linn's Gill as another man, he shall not be disturbed. He was my father's friend, and Dorothea liked him. I

know he is no favourite of yours, Christie; but let that pass; Mikky Hawes shall hold Linn's Gill!"

Christie Swithenbank did not look pleased; he said nothing, but he broke his yarn, and dropped a dozen stitches at once, and Andrew Law continued. "Out of the rent of Linn's Gill, I will that schooling be provided for Felix, for five years at least; and, after that time, Christie, he shall help you in your husbandry, and be taught worthily to fill his grandfather's place. You knew the old man, Christie; he was a good farmer, and there were no fields, in his time, like those at Linn's Gill; it lies warm, Christie—oh, it is a bonny place! and I thought to have died there; but the Lord's will be done! And now, my friends," added he, after a moment's pause, "may God bless you and yours, as you are faithful to this charge!"

Spite of Christie Swithenbank's love for Felix, and reverence for his father, this remark fell somewhat unpleasantly on his spirits—as if he had insinuated, that they could be other than faithful. "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing!" was the secret feeling of his bosom, and his reply in part expressed his dissatisfaction.

"You'd may-be better put another neame i' th' will, Maister Law; sure I've nae objection in life, seeing as how I'd wish to do right by th' lad."

"I will tell you," returned Andrew, "exactly the case. I know no man whose name I would put with yours, Christie; and I believe there need none. Had Joshua Gilsland been living, I should have left the boy under his care."

These words again wounded Christie's self-love, and troubled Alice a little also; but they said nothing, and Andrew went on.

"Joshua Gilsland's nephew, and the cousin of my late beloved wife, might have some claim upon the child; but I know nothing of the man. He lives in London; and report has said, although good Joshua Gilsland brought him up, that he is a free liver, and has a fine lady for his wife. I would not willingly venture the boy in their hands. I saw him at his uncle's funeral. But, my friends, my wish is, that you do not communicate with him, either respecting my death or the child, unless"—and here Andrew paused, as if unwilling to speak what he had to say—"unless you become weary of the charge of the child," said he, half hesitating still.

“Maister Law!” exclaimed Alice, “how could ye think sae?”

“I only speak of a *possibility*,” replied Andrew: “no man can say positively what he shall, or shall not do, in a few years. But my dying request will be, that the boy remain with you, and that he be taught to revere the good stock from which he has sprung.” Here he covered his face with his hands, and breathed an earnest but a silent prayer, that the Great Father would help it so to be!

“Theodore Le Smith,” said Andrew, after a silence of many minutes, “is the name of the man in London.”

“A mortal queer neame,” returned Christie, after making an unsuccessful attempt to speak it.

“The name and the address is here,” returned Andrew, taking a small slip of paper from under the red tape that tied up the will; “but to him you shall only consign the boy, in case of absolute necessity: any such absolute case I cannot, however, foresee. But in your hands I leave him; and no greater proof of my regard for you could I give, had I half England to bequeathe! Heaven abundantly bless and prosper you, and make the child an example to your children, and a blessing to your old age!”

With these words Andrew Law went to lie down beside his sleeping child, leaving the Swithenbanks to talk over this communication together; in which, as we have seen, were several things that were somewhat unpleasant. They did not like the preference given to Joshua Gilsland, nor the implied possibility of their failing in their duty; but above all was it displeasing to Christie, that Mikky Hawes should be bequeathed as the tenant of Linn's Gill. Mikky and he had never been friends; and, besides, he had instantly decided in his own mind to fix his brother Richard, who had long been an ill-doing farmer in Garsdale, upon Linn's Gill, and thus enable him to repay certain monies which Christie had lent him. Nevertheless, it is only justice to say, that, spite of these things, the dalesman and his wife loved Felix too well, and were too much touched by the prospect of the father's death, thus opened upon them, not conscientiously to determine on righteously fulfilling their duty to them both; and they sat devising many a kind-hearted little scheme, to an hour in which it was very unusual for dalesfolk to be out of their beds.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE NEW INMATE.

FELIX LAW was seven years old when his father died; and, as he was thus thrown entirely upon the good offices and affection of the Swithenbank family, it behoves us now to speak of the children of the household. These were five in number. Tommy, the eldest, the favourite and supposed heir of Peggy Hibbledon, of Garstthrop—a boy quite after her own heart, dull of intellect, but of an iron constitution, and “a prime knitter;” Ralph, a boy of lighter make and quicker intellect, and Felix’s school-companion, whenever he could devise no plea upon which to beg a holiday from father or mother; for they, having gradually outgrown the effect of Andrew Law’s scholarship, began soon to hold book-learning in less estimation. Besides these, were three younger children, one only of which we shall particularize, and that the only girl, “lile (little) Katie,” as she was called, the pet and pride of the family. Dear as she was to all the family, none loved her better than Felix; and to his care was she constantly confided, in preference to her own brothers, because the mother soon discovered

that, in spite of his being the inheritor of his father's love of books, and of his mother's delicate frame, he was far more trust-worthy than either of her elder sons.

After the death of his father, as may well be supposed, Felix gave less attention to books. It could not be otherwise; for, though he went to the free school in Dent-town, he found Latin and Greek very dull studies, after his father had ceased to be his teacher. But Felix had other occupations, well suited to his years, in which he found great pleasure; and Ralph Swithenbank, though he loved neither books nor work, was yet a good playfellow; and his invitation of "Come and lake," or play, was never refused. He was always ready to go with him to the beck, to tickle and catch trout, in doing which they were wonderfully successful; and though poor Alice, ever since the misfortune that happened to Johnny, had great terror of their playing near the water, yet she always welcomed them and their trout, with good will, and was ready to fry it with slices of ham—a favourite dale dish, and not a despicable one either.

"The willing back bears the burden," says the proverb; and therefore Felix had plenty of work to do, as well as play: but what was

work such as his, out in the open air, and in the pleasant fells? It was as good as play. He helped to fodder the cattle; he counted the sheep, and would go for miles over the hills, and into the distant dales, after the stray ponies. Whenever Christie went to the peat-pot, that is, to the portion of the peat-fell which belonged of right to him, and where he went, once a year, to cut peat-turfs, and set them up to dry, before they were fetched home and stacked for fuel, Felix was always his chosen companion. "Ye must go with me to th' peat-pot, to morn," he would say, "for I canna do wi' th' other lads; they're a' for laking and mischief! Sae ye'll be ready as soon's its leight."

It was rather dull work, to be sure, up on the solitary fell-side, to be following Christie's spade all the day, and rearing up the black turfs one against the other, so that the wind might blow through them; still Felix never refused to go; for, in the midst of his work, he saw many things that filled him with delight, and, not least, the dancing, dazzling vapour, which the heat of the ascending sun drew upward from the spongy and moist ground. Then, besides this, and the bringing home the peats from the fell, after they were dry, and stacking them up behind the

house, there was the looking after the geese in spring. Felix never failed, before he went to school, to run down to what was called "the goose-hull," a kind of little hut, about four feet square, formed and roofed with coarse peat sods, built on the bank of the beck (or river,) and opening on to it; here the geese had nests, and here they hatched their eggs. To them Felix, every morning, carried food, and faithfully reported of their condition. Besides these, which were the property of the family, he had his own particular goose, called "Peggy Punch," and whose nest he made in the cart-hovel. Most punctually did he carry her food and water, bathing her breast when he fancied she was suffering from heat, and expending upon her both affection and unwearying care. In return, Peggy Punch was an excellent goose, always bringing finer, and even more numerous broods than any in the neighbourhood. Felix had his dog, too, the gift of Dannel o' Foxcroft, which had now grown into a fine sagacious creature, admirably skilful in fetching up sheep, and performing all those duties which the dogs of shepherds are remarkable for. His dog was called Tender, and was as well known, and as much admired, as Felix himself.

Then he had Katie to love, and Ralph to play with; and, as the dale children would say, "Ralph Swithenbank was good to lake with, any how." Among their other pastimes Ralph and he set up little mills, at every fall of the gill; and at one particular time, when Christie had missed the boys for two whole days, excepting at meals, and went out to find them, tracing them by their voices up the gill to the very top of the fell, he counted no less than six-and-twenty of these merry little mill-wheels all turning at once. Felix's life, certainly, at this time, must have been a happy one, even though the memory of his father's loss often overclouded his spirits. But the buoyant heart of a child cannot be always grieving; and, with the increase of health, which this more active, out-of-doors life occasioned, came a yet freer and more joyous flow of spirits. Poor Felix! he would certainly have been perfectly happy but for two causes, which we will now relate.

When good Andrew Law made his will, he thought he was leaving things in the best possible way. He thought he had secured fast friends and a good home for his boy, and a careful managing tenant for Linn's Gill. Poor man! he little knew that he had

left an apple of discord among his friends. Mikky Hawes, the merriest old man in all Dent-dale, was, from some cause or other, greatly disliked by all the Swithenbank family, whether in Dent-dale or Gars-dale; and Christie o' Gibb's Ha,' as we have already said, greatly disappointed that he could not place his own brother at Linn's Gill, without violating the will of Andrew Law, revived every old animosity, and kept his mind in a perpetual state of excitement and ill-will; and, spite of Felix being perfectly guiltless of his father's arrangement, Christie, in his angry moods, never failed to vent a deal of his ill humours upon him.

But the well-head of all Felix's discomfort arose from a new inmate in the family. This was Alice's great aunt, Peggy Hibbledon, of whom we have before made mention. Peggy, who, after one or two unfavourable seasons, had found her purse very little heavier for farming; and her rheumatism a great deal worse, from the broken roof, which she would not have repaired, because it would cost money, made a sale of all her household gear and farming stock, and "took the house-end at Gibb's Ha,'" as good Andrew Law had done before her. Nether Christie nor Alice

at all opposed this arrangement, because they thus hoped to make more sure of her farm and her money.

Peggy Hibbledon, or "Naunty," as she was called by the Swithenbanks, was upwards of eighty years of age, yet hale and active, and, to all appearance, likely enough to live out her century. She was a tall but remarkably thin and bony woman, with a hard masculine voice, and spoke the broadest dale dialect. In spirit she was a miser, and had, it was said, almost famished herself to add to her hoards. Her appearance was very uncouth and strange, being dressed at the least possible expense, and in garments of the coarsest texture, and with the smallest consumption of material. When she went out, she invariably, winter and summer, wore a man's old great coat, which, some forty years ago, had belonged to her brother; and having, it may be presumed, worn out such hats as he left, she now wore a small bonnet of some very cheap material, most frequently of cotton. Yet was Peggy Hibbledon scrupulously clean in her person; and a narrow edging of real lace, to the close-fitting linen border of her cap, was the only luxury in which she indulged. It was well there was one redeeming quality about her; for, in par-

simony and ill-humour, the whole seven dales could not match her.

Such was the person who, within twelve months after good Andrew Law's death, came to occupy his place in the chimney-nook, and to sleep in the very chamber which Felix and his father had called their own, and where, even yet, hung the portraits of Dorothea's parents, and where the chests containing her own and her husband's personal property yet stood, and where, according to Andrew Law's last request, they were to remain till Felix was of an age to remove them back to Linn's Gill. Felix helped Mrs. Swithenbank to empty and refill the bed with the feathers she had taken out to dress; he beat the little bit of bed-side carpet, and carefully brushed the old moreen bed-hangings, and was the most useful creature in the world to the good wife, all the day she was whitewashing the walls and ceiling of the chamber. One might have thought that he had the greatest possible interest in making the new inmate comfortable;—but it was not exactly so; for, all the time, he was thinking that Nauntty was very cross and disagreeable, and he wished she were not coming; but Mrs. Swithenbank was busy, and therefore he helped her. She, however, as if to give Felix a foretaste of

what he might expect, was herself very cross, and hard to please, all that day. The truth was, that, in the bottom of her heart, she wished that Naunty had been content to "hide i' Garstel!"

"Ay, bairn!" said Gideon, in his weak querulous voice, that same evening to Felix, who found him just ready to cry, and sitting among the fodder in the cow-shed.

"What ails ye?" asked Felix, sitting down beside him.

"Naunty's coming!" replied Gideon, now fairly crying.

"She won't hurt ye, Gideon!" said the boy, kindly. Gideon moved his head slowly, from side to side, and looked the picture of despair.

"I say," continued Felix, "she won't hurt ye!"

"I's poor Gideon!" was the innocent creature's reply.

"Weel, but everybody's kind to ye," replied Felix. Gideon looked in his face with an expression that almost startled him, and said, "A gert while since, afore the Maister was here, afore Johnny, poor bairn! was drowned, I leaved i' Garsthrop."

"Did ye leave wi' Naunty?" asked Felix; for of that he never had heard.

“I’s poor Gideon!” he replied. “Naunty has a heavy hand;” and he begun to rub his head and shoulder, as if the pain of the blows had returned.

“Did she thresh ye?” asked Felix, indignantly.

“I’s poor Gideon!” was the half-witted creature’s reply, “and I canna tae the pricks!” (cannot knit.)

“No,” said Felix, who was quite aware of this unfortunate inability, “but I’ll learn ye!”

“Ay, ay!” chuckled poor Gideon, forgetting at once his trouble, in the prospect of learning to knit. Felix was true to his promise, as far as the attempt went; but he soon made the melancholy discovery, that to “tae the pricks” was too intricate a business for poor Gideon.

The day at length came on which Naunty was to be fetched; and Christie, intending to do honour to his relative, bespoke the loan of Matthey o’ Rivelin’s new tax-cart, or shandry, the only one in the dale, for the purpose. The family were all up before day-break, and Tommy, who was Naunty’s favourite, was to accompany his father. As soon as breakfast was over, Tommy was despatched with the horse, and Christie, booted and

great-coated, was to set off by the short footway, soon after, and so meet him at the Rivelin; whence they were to set forth in grand style. Scarcely, however, seemed Tommy to have gone, when he returned, at full gallop, and out of breath, bearing the disastrous tidings that Matthey's shandry lay in a ditch by the bridge, with the shafts broken off, and otherwise disabled. Scarcely had Tommy assured the astonished household that it could be no other than Matthey's, seeing he had spelled the name at the back, when the good-man of Rivelin made his appearance. There could be no longer any doubt, for he came full of wrath against all borrowers and lenders of shandries, his having been lent the day before, to take Adam o' Baxensyke to Sedbur' Fair, and thus demolished on its return.

"I neither tae it neeghbourly nor civil o' ye," said Alice Swithenbank, applying every word of Matthew's tirade to themselves, "and I wish we'd niver asked ye to lend it us!"

"Why a! why a!" remonstrated Matthew; but Alice interrupted him. "Ye needna 'Why a!'" said she, "I kna' na why we need borrow o' any man—we've a good cart of our ain; and Naunty had as lief ride in it as in

yer fine, new-fangled whirl-a-gig; and I'm glad nane o' us set fute in it."

Matthew tried to mollify matters, but she replied by addressing her husband. "Now, pray ye be brisk, Christie, and get th' cart cleaned out, and put th' elbow-chair in it, and lay a lile feather bed i' th' bottom, and I'll be boun' th' ould body 'll ride cannily enough!"

Christie Swithenbank, although he was a middle-aged man, had yet thought, with considerable pleasure, of driving a smart new shandry into Garsdale; and it was with the humiliating sense that he did not cut as good a figure as he meant to do, that he passed his neighbour on the high-road. Matthey had walked away from Gibb's Ha' affronted, and Christie had taken his wife's view of the affair; therefore, for the first time in their lives, the two dalesmen passed with a very cool nod of recognition.

Although Peggy Hibbledon's sale had taken place two or three days before, and almost every moveable had been taken out of the house, still she remained its tenant; and that morning had prepared, upon her cold and comfortless hearth, her breakfast of porridge, in a pipkin without a handle, which no one had thought worth buying. As Christie had promised to be with her by ten o'clock, no

sooner was her breakfast over, than she carried forth her portable luggage—sundry baskets, and innumerable bundles, leaving two oaken chests to be removed by the stouter arm of her kinsman; and, being ready apparelled in her travelling gear, with a pink and white gingham handkerchief tied over her cotton bonnet, she took her seat on the horse-block, whence she got a sight of the road, and should thus have the first view of his approach.

Peggy's great silver watch, round and bulky as a moderate-sized turnip, told the hours ten, eleven, and twelve, and yet Christie had not made his appearance; and, as the time wore longer, her temper grew shorter, till at length she came to the determination, that now, come when he would, she would not go that day.

"That's tou at last!" exclaimed Peggy, as at length the cart halted at her door.

"Ay sure," returned Christie, "and I hope ye're ready!" It was the most unlucky expression Christie could have used.

"Ready!" she retorted; "that's your word, is it? Why, I've been sitting three long hours upo' th' horse-block! Ready, indeed! It's nae me as will wait next time!" And, saying that, she deliberately began to take off her travelling habiliments.

“Now, what are ye after, Naunty?” said Christie, soothingly; “I’s nae to blame—Matthey’s shandry’s brokken, and I was fain to come i’ th’ cart.”

“Tell na me that th’ shandry’s brokken,” returned Peggy; “am na I eighty-three, and niver set fute i’ a shandry i’ my life? and ’tis na likely it ud get brokken th’ varra day I wanted it! Na, na; tou may go back as tou came!”

“Alice has sent ye th’ big chair, and a feather bed,” remonstrated Christie; “ye’ll go cannily, ony how, i’ th’ cart!”

“Thinks she I’m leame, or hae got a brokken back, that she mun send feather beds for ma? I tell tha I winna gae!” And, with these words, she raked up the peats on the hearth, and woke up the slumbering fire, while Christie, sorely vexed, yet not venturing to utter a word, stood in the door-way striking his boots with his whip.

Peggy, however, had no intention of foregoing her comfortable residence at Gibb’s Ha’; she was only determined to give as much trouble as she could: therefore, after what she thought a needful show of resistance, she allowed her personal property to be put into the cart, and herself to be seated “i’ th’ big chair, upo’ th’ feather bed.”

A rainy afternoon’s drive in a cart, twelve

miles, from Garstthrop to Gibb's Ha', in Dentdale, with the wind driving right into her face, did not, of course, sweeten poor Peggy's temper; nor did the sight of the warm cozy fireside, and Alice smiling in her best, nor the merry shouts of the children, who, like all country children, thought that a guest coming, especially when "suet cakes, wi' currants in," were made, was a very pleasant event, mollify her; and her first salutation was about the offending feather bed.

"Ay, tae it oot, pr'ythee, for th' watter's bin sopping aboot ma feet like pools i' a peat-pot!" And, stalking into the house, she did not deign even to notice Tommy, who, after he could not ride in the tax-cart, had declined to accompany his father, but now met her at the door.

A night's rest often has a wonderfully soothing effect, even upon a rough temper; but Peggy's first words announced that she had again found a cause of displeasure.

"I sall na hae those gert ill-favort picturs i' ma chamer," said she, on first meeting with Alice, "and I hae turned 'em oot upo' th' stair-head!"

"They were the Maister's," returned Alice, "and I gave him my word they sud hing there till th' bairn went to his ain hame!"

"I care na what ta promised," replied

Peggy; "but i' my chamer they sall na be! An' pry'thee, where's th' sampleth, framed and glazed, at I gie thee when ta wert wed? Mappen (may happen) it warn't good enough to hing up!"

"Why, a! now," returned Alice, "it hings a back o' th' door!"

"And a' thae kists i' th' chamer," continued the old body, without noticing Alice's explanation respecting the sampler, "I reckon they war th' Maister's too."

"Ay sure," replied Alice, "and ye must na shift 'em. I put 'em all oot o' th' way, ane o' top o' th' other; they hold his mother's things, poor bairn!"

"I sall nae hae em i' my chamer," was her reply; "and sae noo tou knaws."

Felix's property was accordingly removed out of the chamber in which his father had died, and all was stowed away, some here and some there, as Alice could best find room; and the two portraits, turned face to face, were laid upon the wooden head of poor Gideon's bed, up in the loft.

CHAPTER IX.

MIKKY HAWES'S SHEEP-WASHING.

THE influence of Peggy's unhappy temper was felt by all; but Felix and Gideon were especially the objects of it. There is, unfortunately, no disease more infectious than bad temper; and, by degrees, every member of the family, more or less, became soured by it. It would have been impossible to recognise the fireside as that at which Andrew Law, scarcely three years before, had sat, with the children gathered about his knees, and kindly neighbours sitting around, "wi' the pricks i' their hands," listening to the book he was reading, or merrily talking, as good neighbours wont, and parting, towards midnight, with friendly "fare-ye-weels," and "we's reeght glad to see ye!"

Poor Peggy Hibbledon! she was a most unhappy being, as the unamiable always are; but, what was most to be lamented was, the influence she gained over the mind of Christie Swithenbank himself. His very countenance had become changed; it had acquired a hard, suspicious expression, while his temper was irritable and severe. Peggy, to whom money was an idol, spared not to speak of Christie's

losses by his brother, and of the wrong "the Maister" had done him, by not leaving Linn's Gill in his own hands, to tenant as he pleased. Linn's Gill was a sort of Eden in Dent-dale, and the very sight of its green "pasture heads," and the abundant flocks on its fell-side, all lying, as they did, within sight of the windows of Gibb's Ha', was a never-ending source of chagrin. Peggy, poor woman, had it always on her tongue; at one time reproaching Christie with not getting violent possession, and at another, abusing the memory of "the Maister," as having ill-used his "oud friend, for the sake o' a cretur like Mikky Hawes, who was a'ways up to some nonsense or other, just like a gert bairn!"

It was sorely against the kind heart of Alice, that all this unhappiness existed; but the current of parsimony and crabbedness had set in too strong, for her to resist. It was only by stealth, now, that she could slip into Felix's hand the hot suet-cake which she had privately baked for him, when he had been with his dog, to some solitary barn of "the intake," or farthest *enclosed* pasture on the fells, to fodder the young cattle on a cold winter's afternoon. It was only by stealth that any little indulgence was afforded; for she yielded, good woman as she was, to the

stronger powers, not because she liked their ways, but for peace sake! Gibb's Ha' was, indeed, a changed and a melancholy place!

Felix could not help disliking Peggy Hibbledon, and all the more because she neither spared his father's memory, nor his living friend, Mikky Hawes; and he often stole to bed, without his supper, that he might get out of her way.

In the third summer after his father's death, and during the midsummer holidays, he ran down, as did many a dales-boy beside, to see the sheep-washings in the "dubs," or deep rocky basins of the beck, or river, where this operation was performed. Mikky Hawes had assembled his neighbours to assist at his sheep-washing, which was to take place on that particular day, in the great dub at Scale-gill-foot; that is, where Scale-gill discharges itself into the beck. There was Matthey o' Rivelin, and his man; there were the three stout brothers, the Hodgsons of Lilly-garth, and Adam Hibblethwaite of Studley-syke. The three Hodgsons and Mikky were all busied in the dub, washing the sheep and wringing out their fleeces, while the others caught and dragged forward the bleating creatures, which were penned in folds just by, for the operation.

There also were three or four merry young girls, all "dale lasses," handing out rum and milk, every now and then, and ready, the whole time, to laugh and joke with anybody.

It was a very attractive scene to Felix, especially as he had heard Peggy Hibbledon say, the night before, that "it was a' extravagance—sae much eating and drinking, and such a rabble o' folk, either at a washing or a shearing; and, sae lang as she leeved at Gibb's Ha,' she'd order things in anither fashion." From this, Felix understood that there would be no merry-making for them this year; and, on that very account, he was the more disposed to enjoy a merry-making elsewhere. He was warmly welcomed by Mikky, with whom he was a great favourite, and who had a perverse pleasure in entertaining him, and even decoying him to his house, because he knew it vexed Christie, and "th' oud woman," as he called Peggy.

Mikky was merrier than common that day, because he had worked hard and drank freely of the rum and milk. "He does na get fat wi' laughing, up yonder, poor bairn," said he, taking Felix by the arm, and talking the while to Matthey o' Rivelin.

"Th' oud lady's as sour as th' north side o' a crab-tree," returned Matthey.

"I's warrant, now, he knaws na the taste o' a berry (gooseberry) pasty," said Mikky Hawes.

Felix said they had had none this year, "because there was a blight upo' th' berry-bushes." He might have said something very witty, indeed, for they all laughed, and said they believed there was; and then, one of the Hodgsons o' Lilly-garth, told how Tommy Hibbledon, Peggy's brother, who was living some forty years ago, had, once upon a time, when he had got a drop too much at Sedbur' Fair, done so rash and unheard of a thing as to invite his father and two or three more to dinner. All were amazed at his venturing so far, for they all knew that Peggy was "maister at hame," and hardly allowed the poor body victuals to eat: and so, for curiosity, they all promised to go; agreeing, however, among themselves, to take their dinner with them. When the day came, they took a roast leg of mutton, a cold goose, and a big berry pasty, with a keg of strong drink; all which they hid behind the peat-stack, and then presented themselves as expected guests. Sure enough there was the table spread, and there was Tommy, but looking, for all the world, as if his head was off; and Peggy stood in the

chimney nook, over a fire about as big as a hat, frying a handful of something in the pan, and looking as black as a thunder cloud. "Weel," said he, "when they saw what a dish o' cat's tongues* there was going to be for dinner, one o' the party slipped out, and, as the table stood at the back o' th' screen, he put the things on as cannily as could be—roast mutton at top, cold goose at bottom, and herry pasty i' th' middle, and th' keg o' strang drink upo' th' table as stood by. When all this was done he made as if he was just come in, and 'Aweel, Peggy,' says he, 'I's sure we's obleeged to ye!' 'Nane o' our wives could a gotten a better dinner!' says another; and, 'Is this a goose o' ye're ain fattin',' says a third,' a' gathering about the table, while Tommy, poor body, looked just ready to drop. 'Dinna fash ye're sel to fry the cat's tongues,' says one of them; 'here's mair than we sall eat, upo' th' table;' and they gave Tommy a wink, and so sat down, and a rare merry night they had of it, for Peggy was sae vexed, she taed up her pricks and went out; and so they had it a' to themselves; and, sure, what a dinner did poor Tommy eat! for he was half famished. How

* A dale-phrase for a meagre dish.

they settled it afterwards, atween 'em I know not, but father used to laugh till tears run down his face, whenever he told it."

With this merry story, the sheep-washing being ended, and the flocks again turned abroad, they went up Linn's Gill to supper; Mikky keeping fast hold of Felix, and declaring that he should have berry-pie and cheesecake for his supper, unless he liked better "to hae a drap o' tea wi' th' women-folk; for his oud woman," he said, "made rare tea; it was as strang as dragon's blood, as sweet as ony syrup, wi' a citation o' cre-am in't!"

Amid all this good cheer Felix enjoyed himself amazingly; but he took care, as he well knew he must, to get back to Gibb's Ha' before dusk, that Christie and Peggy Hibbledon might not question of his absence. Poor fellow! he could not help wishing, as he lay in his bed, that he lived at Linn's Gill with old Mikky and his wife, rather than here, where everybody looked so dull, and where he never could go even into the chimney corner, without fearing to anger Peggy.

Felix knew that the sheep-shearing at Linn's Gill would be on the next Monday week; that the same party would be again assembled; that there would be a greater

supper still, and a fiddler and a dance beside; and he determined to be there. One difficulty, however, presented itself—the dance would not be over till past midnight; how, then, should he manage to remain out so long, or get back unquestioned? To gain Christie's permission to go was impossible; he never thought of that; but he did think of asking Alice's leave, for he knew that if he tried very hard, some time when they two were alone together, he could persuade her either to sit up for him, or to leave the door unbarred. He remembered her many little kindnesses—the triangles of buttered kettle-cake, slipped secretly into his hand when he went out, after some ebullition of Christie's temper. How his heart glowed towards her at this remembrance! And, in the strength of this remembrance, he spoke.

"Might I gae to the shearing at Linn's Gill?"

"Why a! now," said Alice, confounded at the question; "what's come to the bairn? Would ye hae Christie to fleesh ye, that ye talk o' Linn's Gill i' that fashion?"

Felix, however, was not to be silenced. "A weel, now," he replied, "is na Linn's Gill my ain, where a' my father-folk leaved afore me, and where I was born, and where

my mother died? Why may na I gae to the shearing?"

Alice looked sorry and puzzled, and Felix went on. "Let me gae, dear Alice! It's sae wae here! I's sure I niver hae a kind word fra Christie; and, if it was na for ye, my varra heart would break, many a time." And with those words, and the tears streaming down his cheeks, he took hold of her hand. "Just leave the door unmade, and I'll nae make a noise. Christie winna hear me, nor Naunty; and I'll bring lile Katie a cheese-cake and a bit o' berry-pie!"

Poor Alice could not resist. "Now, promise me," she said, "if Christie finds oot where ye've been, ye must na say as I helped ye!"

"Niver fear me!" said Felix, kissing her; "Christie may fleesh me to death afore I'll tell!"

CHAPTER X.

MIKKY HAWES'S FESTIVAL.

THE sheep-washing supper was nothing to the shearing supper. Mikky was in high spirits, for his sheep were the best on the fells, and all his neighbours protested that he had "the finest show o' woo' o' any yan

i' th' dale!" Like as in the days of the Hebrew Shepherd-kings, on one of their pastoral festivals, "who had gone to him then, had gone to him on a good day;" and he determined that nothing should be spared in the entertainment of the guests.

All who had been at the sheep-washing were at the shearing also, and many more beside; for every body liked Mikky, and his "oud woman," as he called her; and "Elsy o' Mikky's," as they called her, was reckoned a rare cook. There was Nelly o' Rivelin and her sister, a bonny lass, who bid fair to rival Nelly herself, out of Swale-dale; and the lasses that the three Hodgsons o' Lilly-garth were courting; and there were Adam and Isabel o' Studley-syke, and their five grown bairns; and all the Cudforths o' Dockin-syke; and half the dale beside;—such a shearing as had hardly ever been known before. Felix had his dinner at Gibb's Ha,' and then, slily touching Alice's arm, and exchanging with her a look of intelligence, and whispering, "I's nae forget lile Katie!" went out, and ran with good speed up to Linn's Gill, fearing greatly, all the way, although he had seen Christie set out to look after the sheep upon the fell, lest he should, unexpectedly, come upon him at every turn.

As soon as Felix reached the garden gate

at Linn's Gill, he heard the sound of a fiddle, and, the next moment, saw the old fiddler seated on a stone under the great pear-tree, on the sunny side of the house, tuning his instrument; while his daughter, a young girl of about eighteen—who, being an excellent dancer, accompanied him, not only to entertain the people with her *pas-seul*, but also to assist her father's music with her tambourine—sat on the ground beside him, fast asleep, with her head leaning upon a mossy bend in the tree trunk, which served her for a pillow. The girl was slight of form, and good looking, although sun-burnt: she was dressed in a faded red silk petticoat, and a black bodice with loose white sleeves. She had wrapped her head in one corner of the large tartan shawl that enveloped her person, but which, falling open in her sleep, revealed her under habiliments. Felix knew this pair, for they frequented the dales in seasons of festivity, and were retained wherever extraordinary merriment was going forward.

“So there'll be a dance,” said Felix, speaking low, that he might not disturb the girl. The old man looked up, and, still drawing the bow slowly across the strings, returned the salutation; “and a merry dance I's sure,” continued Felix.

"I's bought a ha'poth o' rosin down i' Dent-town," said the old man, "for the missis niver fails either i' eating or drinking, and I'll keep their feet at it langer than the day lasts:" and, so saying, he bent down his ear to his fiddle, and, looking up archly out of the corners of his eyes, scraped away to his merriest measure, as a specimen of his skill. The accustomed sound wakened the girl; she rubbed her eyes, sat up, and looked ready for action; but, seeing that her father was performing to so small an audience, wrapped herself completely in her shawl, and, in two minutes, was again fast asleep. Felix very much approved of this sample of the night's entertainment; and, feeling as if the old man's merry strain had set the muscles of his feet in movement, or as if, like Mercury, living wings were growing from his heels, he ran into the house, to see how affairs were going on there.

The kitchen and the parlour were both full of guests; and merry women's faces were even seen looking through the chamber windows. How all the guests were to find seats below stairs, it was not easy to tell. Elsy had outdone herself in her cookery. There were four great pies, made of legs of mutton, cut small, and mixed with currants, raisins and candied peel—a favourite dish—

all swimming with rich syrup; there were rice puddings, with currants in; munificent dishes, smoking hot, of trout and slices of ham; berry (gooseberry) pasties and cheese-cakes, without number; and that needful accompaniment of a rustic feast, plenty "o' strang drink."

All pronounced the supper excellent, and all bore testimony to the truth of their words, by the quantity they ate; nor were the old fiddler and his daughter forgotten; for though they were set down to the little dresser in the back kitchen, they were most liberally supplied with all the good things of the table.

Felix was no little astonished to find, "after the rage of hunger was appeased," and all began talking, that their own fireside at Gibb's Ha,' and the altered housekeeping there, seemed to be the most fertile topic of conversation. Every one had his joke or his anecdote, and he himself was constantly appealed to for the truth of what they told.

"O! she's a rare ane, that Peggy o' yours!" said Adam Hibblethwaite; "I's welded her o'er and o'er, and I canna find a lock o' leggin in her; she's a' futing!"

To make this characteristic description intelligible we must be allowed to interrupt our narrative with a word or two. In these

dales, the farmers often employ themselves in the house, with sorting and carding wool for knitting at home: this they call *welding*; the fine locks of wool are thrown aside, for the better parts of the stocking, and are called *leggin*, while all the coarse goes by the name of *futing*, or footing. Hence, Adam Hibblethwaite's description was strikingly appropriate. Peggy was altogether composed of the roughest and coarsest material.

A loud laugh from all the company followed his words; and the young people rose up, impatient for dancing. The tables, the chairs, and the wooden screen, vanished as if by magic; the fiddler took his seat on a stool at one end, and the fiddler's daughter commenced the merriment with a *pas-seul* that won the applause of all the company. So much, indeed, was she applauded, and "sae bonny" was she, all agreed, that Laurie Hibblethwaite, much to his mother's chagrin, it must be confessed, asked her to be his partner; and, forthwith, two-and-twenty couple stood up for a country dance.

They kept it up till past midnight; and then Mikky Hawes declared that "it was na fit for a bairn to go by his sel; and that he should e'en stay, now he was there, and sleep i' th' varra chammer where he was born." Felix had no fear of robbers entering the

house at Gibb's Ha,' even though the door were left unbarred through the night; and, as he was tired and sleepy, and really was disinclined to turn out, late as it was, he allowed himself to be over-persuaded, only making Mikky promise to call him as soon as it was light, that he might get back before Christie was stirring.

Mikky was true to his promise, only in part. At half past three he went to the chamber in which Felix slept, with the intention of waking him, and returning him to Gibb's Ha,' with some remnants of the last night's feast for his breakfast. But Felix was so soundly asleep, that the old man returned to his bed, declaring he could not find in his heart to disturb the poor bairn.

It was past eight o'clock, and, bright and sunny as the morning was, looked even later, when Felix woke, really terrified and dismayed to find himself where he was, with the full force of Christie's vengeance before his eyes; while the sense that he had deceived his friend Alice, by staying out all night, lay yet heavier upon his heart. He did not forget to ask Elsy to give him a cheesecake and a bit of berry-pasty for lile Katie; which was given with such cordial good will, that he then preferred the same

request for poor Gideon; and, scarcely able to eat any breakfast himself, set forth for Gibb's Ha.' Christie was "away to Sedbur'" on some business, and Alice was about her own household work, at the back of the house, when Felix arrived; but her countenance showed too plainly that she was grievously displeased with him.

"A weel," she said, "ye've kept ye'r promise rarely! What think ye the good man threatened the morn, when he fand the door open, and ye nae at hame when he wanted ye?"

"I's sae wae!" returned Felix, "but it was sae late last neight and I o'erslept mysel the morn. I canna tell what Christie said, but I's sure he's fearful angry."

"Why, he said he'd fleesh ye within an inch o' your life! and ye deserve it!" said she, with a tone very unlike her own; "for I thought na ye would hae deceived me?" And Alice began to scour her brass pan with renewed energy. Poor Felix knew not what to say, nor how to make his peace. He thought, however, it was no time to produce his good things for lile Katie; so, stealing quietly into the pantry, he put them in a plate, and turned a little basin over them, intending to give them some time in the

day; and, in the meanwhile, he went up the gill, to try if he could not find some diversion in looking after his mills and mouse-traps. From Ralph, whom he met soon after, he learnt, to his infinite relief, that his absence was merely supposed to be of the morning, all believing him to have got up by day-break "to go a-laking," and that his father wanted him merely to look after "the Scotty kye"—young Scotch cattle, which he had lately bought—during his absence. A load was at once taken from Felix's mind, and, determining to do his full duty by "the Scotty kye," and everything else beside, he went on to the fells, and did a hard day's work before he returned home. In the afternoon he stole his treasure out of the pantry, and, taking lile Katie and Gideon into the cow-shed, divided it between them. A new difficulty then occurred—the ensuring their secrecy. He enjoined upon them, however, that they should not say a word about it; and he then carried Katie up the pasture, to drive the pleasant memory of the pasty out of her mind, by fresh objects.

Christie returned with a full knowledge of Felix's delinquency. He had fallen in, on his way homeward, with Adam Hibblethwaite, who, talking of the business of the season—sheep-shearing—mentioned Mikky o' Linn's

Gill's great supper, and of Felix, who was one of the company.

Poor fellow! he would not have stood reeling yarn before the door, as he did, had he known what was Christie's intentions towards him as he rode up to his gate. If he had, he would assuredly have been tempted to run off again to the home of his father-folk, before Christie could have reached Gibb's Ha,' by many miles. But as it was, he stood, though not without a sudden palpitation of heart, reeling away, as Christie dismounted, and, instead of taking his horse to the stable, as was his practice, left it, hot as it was, standing at the gate, and came round to the front of the house, cracking his long-lashed, heavy riding-whip.

The next moment he had seized Felix by the arm, throwing down, at the same time, the great wooden, three-legged reel, and began to beat him with all the force of his strong arm.

"Oh Christie, dinna fleesh me! I hae done naething sae varra wrang!" exclaimed he; but Christie was too angry to spare him, and laid on only the more, for his words; and the sounds of his heavy blows sounded through the house. Peggy Hibbledon looked through the window; Tommy and Ralph peeped round the corner of the house, feeling all in a tremble; Gideon ran and hid himself, as

he always did when he was frightened, in the hay-loft, while "lile Katie" cried as if her father were beating her.

"For shame, Christie!" said Alice, seizing hold of his arm, "he's a fatherless and motherless bairn, and ye sall na fleesh him!"

"I'll hae my will o' him! I'll learn him to go to Mikky Hawes's, after we're a-bed!" exclaimed Christie, growing more angry at every word.

"He's a motherless bairn!" continued Alice, thrusting herself between them, "and he sall na be without a friend to tae his part! Get ye gane bairn!" said she, disengaging him from her husband's grasp. "And now, Christie," said she, addressing him, "gae and look after the mare; and then come and tae thy supper, and dinna mae a brute of thyself, i' this fashion!"

Sorely beaten as poor Felix was, the pain of his body was nothing to the anguish and agony of his mind. True, he knew, when he went to Linn's Gill, that he adventured the displeasure of Christie, but now that Christie's blows had fallen heavily upon him, he felt much less grief in having offended, than hatred against his chastiser. Did not his father and his mother, he reasoned, like

Mikky Hawes? and had he not often and often been to Linn's Gill with his father, and sate in the porch, hour after hour, listening to him and the old folks, telling of his grandfather and mother, and the time when he was a boy? How kind and comfortable it all seemed! and must he now be punished for visiting the friends of his dead parents! Poor fellow! he thought of "lile Johnny," drowned in the beck, and he almost thought he would go and drown himself. He was utterly miserable; he felt ashamed of seeing even the children of the house; and, hardly knowing where to go, he went to the pasture-head and looked across the valley. There, nearly opposite, lay Linn's Gill: how he wished he were there! and, in the bitterness of his heart, he felt that, to like Christie again, were almost impossible; even the intercession of Alice, at that moment, failed to soften him. At length he reached the solitary barn on the edge of the fell, and, there sitting down, he tried to compose his mind. How forlorn he felt himself to be! and with what yearning memory he recalled the love and tenderness of his father! With sentiments of affection came a softer state of feeling, and then tears, which streamed from his eyes as if his very heart would break.

Just then, a small warm hand, from behind, touched his cheek softly, and, looking round, half in terror, he saw little Katie, who had followed him up the fields to this lonely place. In a moment her arms were round his neck, and she was sobbing on his bosom.

How holy and healing are love and kindness! Not a word was spoken; but Felix felt that he was not quite alone in the world; and, falling on his knees, with his arm round the child, he poured out his soul to God, though he uttered no articulate sound. Then, stealing softly back to Gibb's Ha,' he kissed the child, and bade her go to her mother, but say not one word about him; and, without encountering any of the family, he then stole softly to his own little bed.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DAY AFTER.

Nothing could have been a more heinous offence, in the eyes of Christie Swithenbank, than that Felix should consort with Mikky Hawes; and the offence was still more aggravated by Mikky himself, as we shall show. Ill news, it is proverbially said, flies on eagles' wings: it was not very long, therefore,

before it was conveyed across the beck, and up to Linn's Gill, that Christie o' Gibb's Ha' had beaten Felix within an inch of his life, all because he had gone to the shearing supper at Linn's Gill. Mikky and his wife were as angry as two kind-hearted old folks, who dearly loved children, could well be, especially when they had been the means of bringing punishment on "the poor bairn" themselves.

"I've niver set fute i' Gibb's Ha' syne his father's death," said Mikky, "but I've half a mind to gae noo."

"Why a! pr'ythee, do!" replied Elsy, "and tae a' the blame o' thysel; for he'd a' gaed hame that neight an' thou'd a let him."

"The Maister sud na a left him i' Christie's hands," said Mikky, "for he's tired o' his bargain aready, if a's true as one hears. What think'st thou if I sud mae matters up wi' Christie, and get him to gie th' bairn up to us?"

"Linn's Gill's his ain natteral haeme," replied Elsy, delighted at the thought; "and tou could, mappen, do better for him than Christie; for I reckon th' forty pounds gaes into na pocket but Christie's;—and he could sleep upo' poor Richard's bed—capital feather bed that—sae he could!"

"I'll gae this varra day," said Mikky: "I'll

just wash mysel, and put on my better coat, and gae afore tea."

The fate of poor Felix was decided instantly, when Mikky, who was hardly asked to sit down, told his wishes to Christie Swithenbank. "I'll nae gie up th' bairn to ony body but yan. I hae his naeme and his address, i' Lunnon;—and to Lunnon he sall gae, for he's gettin above my hand, ony how!" Such was Christie's reply; and when Mikky urged the matter still, grown desperate by the other's doggedness, his only answer was, "I sall na say nae mair;—for my ain mind's made up, ony how!"

"Nay, for sure ye winna send the poor bairn away, for nae sae great fault either," said Alice, as Christie announced his intentions to her that same evening, which intentions were, of course, warmly seconded by Peggy Hibbledon. "For what sud he tae upo' his sel th' care o' other folk's bairns, pr'ythee?" said she; "nay, nay, send him to Lunnon, and he'll learn, I make nae doubt, to know his friends when he gets 'em!"

Mikky had certainly made matters worse, for he had decided Christie upon a step which before had only been in idea. It would vex Mikky Hawes, and that was a tempting reason; whilst he had the unanswerable plea, that in sending the boy to London he

was only fulfilling Andrew Law's wishes, when the time came that he desired to give up the charge. "I sall write to the man this varra neight," said he, "as sure as I leeve!" and accordingly, an hour afterwards, he was seated at his desk, inditing the following letter, which, however, was the labour of two or three nights before it was fairly completed, and then copied out to his satisfaction. Poor Felix had hitherto, on every difficult occasion, been his scribe, but it was not deemed desirable to employ him here, and the epistle ran thus:—

"Mr. THEODORE LE SMITH, Esq.

"Sir—I take the liberty of troubling you about a matter that concerns you and me, and which, when you are acquainted with, you will think it right you should know. Aboot three years syne your respected relative by the wife's side, being the niece of sa respectable a gentleman as Mr. Joshua Gilsland, was removed by death, viz. Mr. Andrew Law, late teacher of the Free School, Dent-town. Being removed by death, after having leeved under my roof for seven years, to wit, since his respected wife's death, he left the care of his bairn, then just turned of seven, to my care, with forty pound' by th' year to be paid for mentenance

in edication, &c. If at ony time I sud wish to place the bairn out o' my hands, it should be i' yours. Things hae sae turned out as makes me wish to turn o'er the care o' th' bairn to you. I sall be greatly obleeged if you will send me word by letter when the bairn sall come to you, as I reckon the stage wagon will be most suitable, being sae young, and without friends. You will be pleased to make proper assignments, and so forth.

“ So no more at this time from me, who am, sir, your obedient Servant,

“ CHRISTIE SWITHENBANK.”

“ *Gibb's Ha', Dent-dale, Yorkshire.*

“ N. B. The £40 goes with th' bairn, for mentinence, edication, ansetra.

“ N. B. An answer will oblige.”

When Felix first heard that he was going to London, an indescribable sensation passed over him; but whether it was amazement, or terror, or a half-satisfaction, would be difficult to say. Perhaps it was all combined. His situation at Gibb's Ha' had become one of constraint, for he never ceased to feel that neither Christie nor Peggy were his friends; and he, many a time, wished he were anywhere than there: but then, he had lived in Dent-dale all his life; he had been very

happy there; and, if Christie and Peggy would but let him, could be very happy there again. London was a vague idea—it was a long way off: he never had known any one who had been there, not even his father. Kendal he heard of frequently, and Lancaster and Manchester, where the butter-carts went weekly out of the dale with butter; but London!—he knew not exactly where it was, and he grew half alarmed when he thought of it; and more especially so, as Mikky and Elsy o' Linn's Gill, and the Rivelin-folk, all were loud and vehement against it, as a hard-hearted scheme. "Nae better," said they, "than transporting the poor bairn, who had neither father nor mother, beyond seas. Christie o' Gibb's Ha' might be ashamed o' himsel!" Thinking of it thus, Felix's heart often failed him; and then the kind face of Alice, and her many acts of kindness; and "lile Katie," so merry and so loving; and Ralph, that was such a good play-fellow—all became inexpressibly dear to him, and he began to dread the answer to Christie's letter, which, it was understood, was to fix the time for his departure.

Several weeks, however, went on, and no answer was received; and, in the meantime, an event occurred, which we must relate in the following chapter.

CHAPTER XII.

KATIE'S ADVENTURE.

"**TH'** red cow's badly; she winna eat, and she looks down i' th' eyes," said Christie, one morning, as he came in from milking.

"Poor cretur!" said Alice, "I'll mae her a warm mash o' meal: it'll, mappen, do her good."

The warm mash o' meal did her a little good at first, but she got worse and worse towards night; and the next morning Felix, who was ever the ready messenger, was sent off by Christie to Dent-town, to fetch the cow-leech; "and tell him to mae a' th' haste he can," said he, "for her's varra badly."

Away ran Felix, anxious about the red cow, for she was a favourite with all the family. When he reached the stepping-stone crossing of the beck, he was greatly amazed to see Katie, with her little bonnet on, who had just passed the water, and was then trudging up the road, as if fearful of being pursued. Felix, who was terrified at the idea of the child crossing the beck by herself, ran after her. "Where are ye boun', Katie, dear?" said he; but the child only laughed, and began to run too.

"Ye sall nae scape me, Katie," said he, catching hold of her.

"Let me gae!" said the child, pettishly; "I winna gae hame!"

"But where are ye gaeing?" asked Felix.

"I's gaeing to Nelly o' Rivelin, for some snaps" (small gingerbread cakes.) And here we ought to remark, that Nelly o' Rivelin, tired of the coolness which had grown up between the families, since the days of the broken shandry, had, of late, made advances towards a reconciliation. "Bring the pricks wi thee, and then thou can stop a bit," said she to Alice, a Sunday or two before; and Alice had accordingly done so, taking lile Katie with her. Nelly knew not how to make enough of her friend; and, while she put a "drap o' rum" in the mother's tea, to "make it mair nourishing," she feasted the child with snaps, for the making of which she was famous. Katie was mightily pleased with her entertainment; and this morning, the family being occupied about the ailing cow, she had stolen off, intending to make a visit to Nelly o' Rivelin, on her own account. The Rivelin was three miles from Gibb's Ha', and the child had advanced half way when Felix overtook her.

"Ye mustna gae, Katie," said Felix; "ye'r mother will be angry."

"She winna!" said Katie, pertinaciously—for she was used to have her own way.

"Does she knaw that ye are gaeing?" asked he.

"Ay!" returned the child.

Felix must have lost a full half hour, had he taken her back, and Christie might be angry; he knew not exactly what to do; he doubted if it were with the mother's knowledge that she had set off, but still she persisted that it was; so, snatching her up in his arms, he ran with her to the end of the lane which led to the Rivelin, intending to make all the more speed to regain the lost time, for he knew, when once at the Rivelin, she would be quite safe; and, from the lane end, it was direct, and scarcely a quarter of a mile.

"Run up th' loaning, and dinna stop pulling flowers, that's a dear," said Felix, as he set her down, and stood for a minute looking after her.

When he reached Dent-town, the cow-leech was not at home. There was a man, knowing in such business, however, living at the Dale-foot, about four miles further on, who had often been employed by Christie; and to him, therefore, Felix went, thinking

up between them. The clear and sound judgment of Mrs. Westbrook was most confidently relied on by Mr. and Mrs. Flamstead, and her energetic spirit often imparted its force to their more timid and languid movements. On the other hand, the thorough amiability and honesty of the Flamsteads greatly pleased Mrs. Westbrook. Strong characters are flattered by nothing so much as by seeing their plans and propositions followed out by their friends, and Mrs. Westbrook was always certain of having the support of the Flamsteads, if she once could convince them of the propriety of any object. The two elder daughters took the most affectionate fancy to her. To go round and see her superintend all the operations of butter and cheese-making; to gather vegetables and fruit for household purposes; to stroll with her through her orchard, and garden, and fields, and to learn, by watching and helping her, all the female acts of preserving, home-made-wine making, and so on, was not, though my fine-lady readers might think otherwise, in that simple country-place, inconsistent with the dignity of Squire Flamstead's daughters, even in their best days.

Mrs. Westbrook took a lively interest in the attachment of Betsy to Robert Nadel, and many were the happy summer evenings in which these three took tea together in Mrs. Westbrook's arbour, and sat and talked on all that interested them in the little society of the place, their connections, hopes, and pleasures.

From the first moment that trouble reached the Flamsteads, Mrs. Westbrook had been the most zealous and sympathising of friends. Could she have roused Mr. Flamstead to the spirited measures which she recommended, and which she, in her own case, would certainly have adopted, it is very questionable

whether Mr. Screw Pepper would have been able to establish such a power over the estate, or have carried things with the high hand that he did. But when she warmly counselled him to such, he only shook his head, and said there were particulars that she did not know of.

The day for removal approached, and Mrs. Westbrook was the true friend in need. She came the moment she heard that this was imperative, and said that they must all come to her till something farther could be done. It was in vain that they represented that they should fill her house from bottom to top, and that they knew not if they should ever be able to make her a recompense.

"The recompense," said Mrs. Westbrook, "is to come to me and let me feel that I can be of any use to my friends."

On the day that they were to remove, she had arranged that they should come and dine with her. There should be no spectacle, no stir, no melancholy procession. Her covered spring-cart should go up to the hall, and in it, laid comfortably on a bed and cushions, Mrs. Flamstead, who was in the lowest state of debility, should be quietly conveyed to her house without anybody being the wiser. The children should make a *détour* and cross over the fields by a road well known to them, and avoid the village and the gaze of the villagers; and Betsy and Nancy should walk down direct to the farm, while Mr. Flamstead and George should drop in as if by chance. The cart should go again in the evening for their effects, and the whole transfer should be made with the greatest quietness.

Melancholy and wringing to the hearts of all as was this abandonment of the home of so many precious

"I's kill ye, as sure as ye leeve," exclaimed Christie, "if ye dinna tell the truth!"

"O I do! I do!" cried Felix.

"I think thou does!" said Matthey o' Rivelin, kindly; "I believe every word thou says; and I'll gae wi' Christie this varra minute, and we'll raise a' th' neebours o' that side th' dale, and find her if she's above ground, niver fear!"

"I'll gae wi' ye," said Felix, "and show ye where I left her, to an inch."

Felix pointed out the place where he had left her, and, a few paces onward in the lane, recognised the very flowers she carried in her hand when he left her; they had been thrown down, probably to gather fresh ones. About the middle of the lane, an old disused road turned to the right, and then, merging into a very indistinct track, led upwards to the fell-head. This road was the not infrequent halting-place of gipsies and wandering potters; perhaps such had been there this very day, and had carried her off. In the lane, however, they found no traces of such halt; but the idea having once been started, could not easily be dismissed. It was therefore proposed, that Matthey should mount his horse, and ride up the old road to the fell-head, and onward into Swale-dale, where was the prin-

cipal residence of the gipsies and potters; and that two or three neighbours, who had joined them, should accompany Christie in another direction, none doubting but she would be found before long.

"Tae a mouthful o' summut," said Nelly o'Rivelin to poor Felix, who, almost tired to death, and full of dreadful anxiety, stood leaning in the porch, looking after Matthey, as he rode up the fell-side.

"I canna eat a bit, thank ye," returned he, "I's sae wae for the poor bairn; but I'll gae hame and up the gill; mappen she gaed back again, and lost hersel on our ain fell."

On his way back he met Mikky Hawes, and the three Hibblethwaites. "Is the bairn fand?" asked Mikky.

"Nae," replied Felix, with his eyes full of tears.

"I seed her mysel the morn," said Mikky. "I was after a stray sheep upo' Rivelin fell, and there she was, poor bairn, pulling a bits o' flowers, as blithe as a lark. 'Wha's bairn art ta?' says I. 'I's Katie o' Christie's o' Gibb's Ha',' says she, as pert as may be. 'Why, a!' says I, 'ta sud na be here!' 'Nay, I's ganging to Nelly o' Rivelin for some snaps,' says she; and I thought she was stay-
ing wi' Nelly, and had run out back way, and

mappen Nelly hersel was na far off; sae I said nae mair."

"Nelly's niver seen her a' day," replied Felix, mournfully. Mikky and his friends said, therefore, that they would go again to the spot, for he could not think she could get very far off.

What a night of terrible anxiety that was! None but the children, at Gibb's Ha', and poor Gideon, went to bed. Alice, it is true, from sheer habit, took up her knitting once or twice, but soon laid it down again. She was far too uneasy to stay in the house, and several times took her lantern and went up into the pastures, and along the gill-side, where Felix had been before her, and down to the beck, calling the child's name, and starting at every sound, in the vain hope that it was her reply; and, ever and anon, upon the distant fells, might be seen the dim spark of lanterns which people carried, all occupied in the search; and in the stillness of the night, the bleating of the disturbed flocks, and even her name, as it was continually called, might be heard.

Towards morning, Christie, and those who had gone with him, returned, bringing no tidings, but still with the hope that she might have been recovered by some other party,

and brought home. But Alice's eager question, "Hae' ye fand her?" spoken ere they reached the door, told him that hope was vain. Nothing, however, was to be done but, spite of weariness, to renew the search; and accordingly Alice brought out refreshments, of which they stood greatly in need.

"I sall niver forgive Felix as lang's I leeve," said Christie.

"Ay," said Peggy Hibbledon, "lads is sae thoughtless; and he beats 'em a'! But for my part, I knaw na why ye had sae much to do wi' the Laws. Was na th' Maister i' some sort the death o' lile Johnny?"

"Nay, nay, Naunty," interrupted Alice, "ye're wrang there; naebody loved Johnny better than the Maister."

"Why a!" replied Peggy, "th' Maister was the last body as saw lile Johnny alive, and now Felix is th' last as knaws ought o' lile Katie! Waes to me! that comes o' taking ither folk's bairns under yan's ain roof-tree!"

"I's get rid o' him," said Christie, very determinedly.

"A weel!" said the neighbours, taking his part, "he is a farrantly bairn, and ye sud na be too rash, Christie; a varra good bairn is Felix, poor thing! and, as for Katie, please God, we'll find her to-morn!"

"Was na Kester o' Basin-gill's bairn fand

a skeleton in a peat-pot, six months after he was lost?" asked Peggy; and th' bairn as was lost i' Garstel, when I was a lass, was fand alive, but she died i' two days. Na, na! reckon upo' Katie when ye set eyes o' her!"

Alice began to cry afresh at these doleful prognostics, and Christie grew more angry than ever. Other neighbours now came in, and fresh plans of operation were laid. It was thought not improbable, that after the time when Mikky Hawes had seen her, that she had still ascended the fell, and gone down on the other side, where she might have been found and taken into some neighbouring dale. It was therefore agreed, that they should divide into parties of twos and threes; and, while their own dale was yet more narrowly to be searched by some, others should ride, with all speed, into the neighbouring dales, and rouse the inhabitants to the search also. In the course of the day every gill was traced on both sides the dale, and the beck, also, although it had been dragged the day before. The dale, from end to end, was all occupied by one feeling—compassion for the parents, and determination to find the child, either dead or living. Alice ran, like one distracted, from place to place, repeating the inquiries of yesterday, but so distressed and agitated as scarcely to be able to speak; but all knew

her errand, and from all she met with sympathy and kindness. "Dinna greet sae," said one, "all our men are out upo' the fells, seeking her; and there's nae doubt but she'll soon be fand!" And "I'd gae wi' ye," said another, "only I've sent out our lads, and my husband's a-bed, poor man! and I canna leave th' house; but ye sall hae a drap o' summut afore ye gae, for I's sure I's wae for ye!"

All this time poor Felix, full of dreadful apprehension, was also in search of Katie; but, like the rest, his search was ineffectual. He had traversed many miles that day, and had scarcely eaten anything; when, as the evening drew on, he neared Gibb's Ha', hoping, as did every other party, that some one of the others had been more successful than themselves. In the course of this day, however, intelligence had been obtained of her by two different parties. The one had met a pedlar woman, who travelled from dale to dale with a flat basket of various wares. From her they heard, that she, that morning, had met a child crying for its mother, such as Katie was described, upon the old disused road near the Rivelin, and that, finding the child to be hungry, she had given her part of a loaf she had in her basket. She said she appeared much frightened,

and pointed to the Rivelin as her home, and in that direction she was going. The other party learnt, that in the afternoon of that day, a child had also been heard crying, at about two miles on the *other side* the Rivelin. A man who was cutting peat heard her, but, supposing it to be merely a child who had passed by with a beggar woman some time before, he had taken no notice of it. This information, vague as it was, however gave new life to the pursuit.

There were, at least, a dozen neighbours in the house when Felix entered. There was meat and drink on the table, and all who were disposed for refreshment took it, even without being invited: for, so wholly absorbed were the household by alarm and distress, that there was no ceremony. Nobody spoke to Felix, and he saw too plainly what was the truth, to ask a question from any one. The children of the family were all in bed: but he was too weary to go up stairs, and stretched himself, therefore, on two chairs, and, before he was aware, had fallen into one of those dead sleeps which excessive fatigue, either of body or mind, produces. The search, in the meantime, had not relaxed. The dale and the fell-sides were still alive with parties, who were abroad with dogs and lanterns; it being the general belief now, that

the child had fallen into some peat-pot, or deep stony gill, and had perished. Alice sat by the hearth, believing herself awake, but in truth sleeping, miserable woman as she was, till the fire had almost died out, and the pale light of early morning stole in through the window-curtain. Felix awoke, cold and stiff, not only from the excessive fatigue of the last two days, but from his uneasy resting-place, and with a heavy sense of unspeakable wretchedness at his heart. He knew that, in some sort, he was reckoned instrumental in the loss of the child, blameless as he was; and, in the agony of his spirit, he prayed that he might be the means of her restoration. Somewhat relieved by this outpouring of his secret feeling, he raked together the peats which lay on the hearth, and revived the fire: the first movement roused Alice; then was breakfast prepared, that no daylight might pass unemployed. Every moment was now precious, for no one attempted to deceive themselves as to the chance of the child's life holding out much longer, even supposing her still alive. In the melancholy apprehension, however, that she had perished, every rugged fell-side, every gill, and every peat-pot in the dale began to be more narrowly examined; while other parties rode into Garsdale, Bar-

bendale, and Swaledale, to assist the inhabitants there in a similar search.

Alice, with some of her neighbours, went in one direction, and Felix, taking his dog with him, set forth alone, intending to go to the Rivelin fells, where Mikky Hawes had seen her. On his way he overtook Mikky himself, who said he would accompany him, although he, and two of his neighbours, had gone over the fells the day before. As they passed the Rivelin, Nelly ran out to tell them that Matthey had found, about an hour before, one of her little shoes on the fell-head; and, about a mile further on, on the very ridge of the fell, one of her socks hung upon a low bramble-bush, as if to dry; and that he and Christie were now gone on, with renewed hope, not doubting but she had wandered along the ridge, or perhaps gone down the other side into the next dale. "I's got a feather bed upo' th' hearth, and warm blankets ready," said Nelly; "and I hae sent our Richard over to Gibb's Ha', to tell her mother, poor body."

Mikky and Felix were overjoyed; and they now came to a deliberation, whether they should take the same route the others had done, or, according to their original intention, search the fells; "for," said Mikky,

“ she’d mappen turn back again, poor bewildered cretur.” Nelly thought it not unlikely, and they turned to the fells. The Rivelin fell-side was the wildest in all the dale, full of crags and little ravines; while the fell-head was one wide peat-moss, and the whole would occupy many hours in the search.

Towards noon they came to the stony bed of a gill, which, in winter time, was filled with a strong flow of water, but now was dry. It was overgrown with bushes, and lay deep and dark in the hollow of a ravine. What was Felix’s inexpressible joy, and, at the same time, dread, to see, upon the strong brambles, a rag of her little pinafore hanging! Mikky put on his spectacles, to examine the torn edge, which, to the joy of both, he pronounced so recent, that not even the dews of the last night could have been upon it. Felix’s heart beat violently; and, with the dreadful apprehension that she might have fallen into that fearful gill, he scrambled down, thankful to see no traces of her, and yet dreading to advance, lest every step might discover her dead body. Up the gill, however, he went, to the very spot where an abrupt wall of stone barred further progress; then down the gill again, while Mikky went with him, step by step, carefully examining the bushes along the upper margin, encou-

raging the dog, to whom they had shown the tattered piece of the pinafore, to the search also.

They traced the gill for about a quarter of a mile, and then they had left the peat, and come into that part of the fell which was broken with scattered crags, and overgrown with bushes of gorse and broom, and short ancient thorn-trees; here the dog turned abruptly to the left, and commenced following a scent. Mikky and Felix, instantly leaving the gill, followed the dog among the bushes. Presently the dog, which was considerably in advance of them, commenced a cheerful bark, and, rushing eagerly forward, no words can describe their joy, when they beheld the form of the little child lying on the ground, as if she had stumbled over the low scrubby roots of broom! The first thought of Mikky, however, was that she was dead; for the joyous barking of the dog, and their own voices, did not rouse her, but he forbore to say so; while Felix, overpowered at the sight, threw himself on the ground, and burst into a passion of tears. Not a word did the old man say, but slowly lifted her from the ground. She had neither stockings nor shoes on, and her legs and feet were swollen and bloody; she had no bonnet on her head, and her thick hair was tangled

and wet; and her formerly round, and rosy face, was pale, and smeared with dirt and traces of tears, and her whole body stiff and cold, and, to all appearance, dead. At sight of so piteous an object, Mikky himself could not help weeping. Felix leapt up, and, taking hold of her hand, which he found so cold and stiff, danced about in an agony of grief. The next moment Mikky had stripped off his coat, and then his waistcoat, in both of which he wrapped her, and then, bidding Felix follow, made what speed he could to the Rivelin.

"Dinna greet sae, bairn," said Mikky, after a few minutes, and in a cheerful voice; "she is nae dead! Bless the Lord, I hae felt her stir! Rin on, and tell Nelly to hae th' bed and blankets ready; and, please God, she'll soon come to hersel!"

Felix did not need telling a second time, but, shouting at the highest pitch of his voice, "She's fand! she's fand!" ran forward to the Rivelin, while the joyful cry, borne onward by the wind, conveyed the glad tidings to many people on the hill-side.

"Ye wad na be mair welcome if ye were an angel from heaven!" said Nelly, as she met the old man at the door. "Gie th' poor bairn to me, and sit ye down, for ye're out o' breath."

Mikky sat down, and Nelly laid the child, wrapt in plenty of warm blankets, on the feather bed on the hearth. Some weak tea, "wi' a drap o' rum in it," as Mikky counselled, was poured in, drop by drop, between her clenched teeth, while Felix, kneeling down beside her, gently rubbed her hands and feet. In about a quarter of an hour she slowly opened her eyes, but without recognising anything. Felix kissed her, and again burst into tears, whilst Nelly asked him "why he grieved, for the poor bairn was coming round."

"I canna tell why," replied Felix, smiling, while the tears were running down his cheeks; "but I am sae glad, I canna help greeting!"

"Why a! now," said Mikky, "I'll be gang-
ing."

"Ye sall hae a horse," said Nelly, "and ride to Gibb's Ha', with the news to poor Nelly; its fitting she knawed."

Mikky saddled Matthey's horse, and away he rode, at such a rate as would have made the quiet dales-folk think him drunk or mad, had he not everywhere spread the joyful intelligence, that "he and th' Maister's bairn had fand lile Katie!" If ill news flies quickly, so does good news; and, in some mysterious manner, though nobody cou'd tell how, the

glad tidings had entered the house at Gibb's Ha' before Mikky himself. Such of the household as were within were all alert, and Alice was throwing on her cloak and bonnet, when Mikky rushed in, altogether forgetful of the feud between himself and the Swithenbanks, exclaiming "A weel, the bairn's safe and sound! Th' Maister's bairn and I fand her." "Ay," replied Peggy, as if she were half sorry it were so, "them as hides can find!"

Neither Mikky nor Alice noticed the insinuation; and Alice, springing upon the horse which Mikky had ridden, regardless of the man's saddle, which, in fact, would matter nothing to a thorough-bred daleswoman, rode away to the Rivelin, with even more speed than Mikky himself had used.

CHAPTER XLIX.

LEAVE-TAKING.

Two events had occurred during these three days, but they excited no attention—the red cow died, and a letter from London arrived. On the evening of the day, however, on which Katie was found, the rite of sepulture was

performed upon the unfortunate quadruped; but it was not till the next morning that Christie observed the letter, which had been stuck into the usual depository of letters and loose papers—the cross iron bar of the window—and, taking it out, turned it first on one side, and then on the other, examined the seal, peeped into the ends, as if he had not himself permission to open it, scratched his head, said, in an undervoice, that he supposed it was from Maister Le Smith, and took it out with him to read.

The truth was, that the active and affectionate interest which Felix had taken in the recovery of lile Katie, had not been unobserved by Christie himself; and, besides this, the attachment which the child showed to him—for even at this moment, while he held the letter in his hand, Felix was sitting by the little bed which had been made for her on the settle, holding the hand which she had placed in his, and if he but stirred from her sight, her feeble, inarticulate voice, was heard calling him to return. Nothing but the strong constitution of a dale child could have survived those three days' and two nights' exposure upon the fells. But the Katie that returned home, was not like the one that stole away three days before, with a

laughing and rosy countenance, and full of health and strength. It seemed as if an illness of many weeks had passed over her. Her voice was inaudible; her eyes dim and hollow, and her cheeks pale and wasted; nor had she even strength to raise her head on the pillow; and so great must have been the terror and bewilderment of the time, that she could recall no single incident, nor give any account of her wandering. All she seemed to desire, after the first inordinate craving of hunger was appeased, was to be still, and have Felix near her. No wonder was it, therefore, that the very sight of the London letter seemed to reproach the father, and that he did not feel greatly disposed to open it in his presence.

“However,” thought he, as he went out, “perhaps the man declines having him; and, if so, why he shall e’en stay with us, for he’s not much worse than other bairns, after all; only,” said he to himself, with vehemence, “I’s nae have him ganging to Linn’s Gill, that I winna, ony how!” With this resolve, Christie again turned to the letter and read the address, “Christopher Swithenbank, Esq., Gibb’s Hall, Dent-dale, Yorkshire.” “Not quite reeght that,” said he; “but, however, nae matter, let’s see what’s inside; and, by dint of half tearing the letter, he got it open,

and in about an hour, after much puzzling and spelling, made out the contents as follows:—

“DEAR SIR, “ London, September 9th, 183—

“ I fear I must have appeared negligent in not replying to your favour, which bears date six weeks ago; but the fact is, it was addressed to a residence which I have left some years, and was, therefore, thus long before it came to hand. My present address is, ‘Theodore Le Smith, Esq., General Post Office, London. (To be called for.)’

“ I am truly sorry to be apprized of the death of my worthy relative, for whom I entertained the profoundest respect, as did every one who had the honour of his acquaintance. My family is small, having but one child; so that this young relative (whose sex, however, you do not tell us,) will be an acceptable addition to it, and will be very satisfactory to Mrs. Le Smith, whose fondness for children is proverbial.

“ The coach would be much preferable to the waggon, as a mode of conveyance, and cheaper also, the child being consigned to the care of any elderly passenger, or coachman, or guard; which is done every day.

“ Forty pounds is a small allowance for the education, board, &c. of a child; but, whatever is wanted additional, I shall esteem

it an honour to lay down. The first half year's payment, a £20 bank bill, which you may obtain at any bankers, you had better enclose in your next, which informs me by what coach the child will be sent.

"The North Briton Coach leaves Kendal every morning, and drives to the Bull and Mouth, Aldersgate; which will suit very well, being just by the Post Office.

"Mrs. Le Smith begs that her compliments may be presented to our young relative.

"I am, dear sir, your very humble and obedient servant,

"THEODORE LE SMITH."

All inexperienced as Christie o' Gibbs Ha' was in epistolary correspondence, there was something about this letter that he did not like; perhaps it was the writer's urgency to obtain the £20 bill; but he could not exactly tell. He read it, therefore, again. Mrs. Le Smith was fond of children; that was very good; and, as to the £20 bill, it could not be that he was eager to get hold of it for his own ends, because he professed himself willing to lay down whatever more than the forty pounds was needed. "No doubt," thought he, "they are gert gentlefolk, and live in a'spensive way;" and besides that, he had always heard that living was dear in

London. "Weel a weel, he must gae, I reckon," was the winding up of his cogitation, "for I promised Naunty he should, and she winna bide being baulked!"

Christie delayed to answer the London letter, for he still, as day after day went on, felt a wavering in his severe intentions towards Felix; when, unfortunately, Mikky Hawes, with the kindest intentions in the world, again decided his prejudices. Mikky thought that, considering the part he had in restoring Katie, her father, no doubt, would be disposed to a more friendly conduct towards him, and that he would therefore again attack him respecting Felix, for whom he entertained a strong affection; so, seeing Christie one day, soon after, at work in his fields, he went up to him and renewed the subject.

"It's nae quite the thing," said he, "to send the bairn among strangers; it would freegthen him out o's wits; ye must na do it, Christie!"

All the old ill will at once came over Christie. "I knaw," said he, "Maister Hawes, that ye reckon me under an obligation to ye, because ye fand th' bairn; now, if money will clear me, name the sum, and I'll pay it; or, if there's ony other way, let me knaw it!"

“There is!” said Mikky, joyfully; “give Felix up to me, and dinna send him a’ that way off!”

“I may as well speak plain to ye at once, Maister Hawes,” replied Christie. “I’ve nae mind to be dictated to by ye! What I’ve said I’ll do, I’ll do! and I’m nae but fulfilling the Maister’s will in sending him to Lunnon; and it’s nae business o’ yours, nor nobody’s else; and I will na be interfered wi’!”

“Weel a weel,” returned Mikky, “take ye’r ain way! but ane word I *will* speak—if anither o’ ye’r bairns were lost, I’d seek it to-morn; but neither for your sake, nor yet for Peggy Hibbledon’s! And I’ll tell ye mair—if ye banish that poor fatherless bairn, the worse I wish ye is, that ye may hae grace to see how ye’ve sold ye’r good name, and made ye’rsel a scandal i’ a’ th’ dale!” And, striking his stout stick upon the ground, he repeated that he wished it, with all his heart, and walked away in a very bad humour.

Christie’s mind was now made up, and he felt it rather like a relief at the moment, for he was worked up to the proper pitch for doing disagreeable business. “A varra decent, weel-spoken man, seems this Maister Le Smith to be,” said he to his wife, trying to impose even upon his own feelings, “and

a varra comfortable hame is Felix likely to have, for the Missis is varra fond o' children, and, poor thing, has but ane o' her own; and Lunnon's a varra fine place, as I've heard."

"Why a! why a!" exclaimed Alice, who hoped her husband had abandoned the idea, "ye canna think o' sending him a' that way, among strangers; him that has been like ane o' our own bairns! Ye canna hae the heart to do it, Christie!"

"I promised Naauty," was his reply; "and, after all, I dinna think but he'll be varra comfortable!"

"I canna think," said Alice, "why Naauty has taken such a misliking to him, poor bairn!"

"I've said it!" returned Christie, determined to strengthen himself, as many men do in a bad argument, by getting into a passion. "I've said it, and it sall be done! He's getting above my hand, ony how; and that oud prating fool, Mikky Hawes, must be melling (meddling) atween him and me! He sall gae, and then there'll mappen be peace!"

A long controversy followed. Alice grew angry, as well as her husband, and then Peggy Hibbledon was referred to by Christie; and the last words of Peggy's argument were, "that she niver liked nane o' th' Laws; they

were a mighty set-up family, as thought themselves better than their neeghbour; and, as for th' Maister's wife, she was a foreigner, that naebody knawed; and Felix was desperately like her; and th' lang and short was, either he or she should leave Gibb's Ha'; and, if she left, every penny she was worth should go to Richard and his bairns, where, after a', it 'ud mappen do maist good!"

Such an argument as this was very conclusive, and even Alice reluctantly confessed its weight. "A weel, poor bairn," said she, "if he must gae, it sall be wi' this understanding, that if he is na comfortable he sall come back again; and I's sorry to think o' his going in ony fly-away coach. I sall na sleep i' my bed, to think we have not only sent him away from's own natteral country, but put 's poor neck i' danger o' top o' one o' them coaches! But he sall gang like a decent man's bairn, wi' Willy Parrington, i' th' butter-cart, to Manchester, and Willy will see him upo' some safe coach, if safe coach there be; or if I thought he would na, I'd e'en gang mysel wi' him to Manchester, and see him off wi' my ain eyes; and a sore day it 'll be for me when he gaes, poor bairn!"

Christie wrote to Mr. Le Smith, informing him that the bairn, which was a lad-bairn,

would set off from Dent-dale that day fortnight, and, in five days thereafter, would be in London, without fail; and that he would go by the stage coach from Manchester, which went to the Belle Sauvage, where he must be met, as he would be a stranger in London. The stage waggon would have been "mair safe," he said, but they were all done away with now, which was a great pity; and he would carry with him also, safely stitched into the lining of his waistcoat, a half year's rent, as desired, which would be much safer than sending by letter, which might so easily be lost.

Of Felix's own feelings, respecting this removal, we will say no more than, that he was very averse to it. He had divers little schemes in his mind, to avoid it, and, among others, to run away to Linn's Gill, and get Mikky Hawes to detain him forcibly; for he knew whatever the old man could do, either to please him or to vex Christie, he would do with thorough good will. This he thought of morning, noon, and night; till at length, won by Alice's affectionate attentions, he resolved upon winning her consent to it, as he had done to the shearing supper. But Alice's consent was not to be won this time. "Nay, nay; dinna do sa," she said; "Christie would amaist kill ye. Gae and see ye'r

Lunnon kin—ye'r ain mother's kin—and she were a varra good woman; and if ye dinna like them, or they are na kind to ye, ye sall come back. Dinna mae Christie angry, pray ye; and ye sall hae new clothes; I'll gae mysel to Sedbur', and buy ye good broad-claith, and Tommy Allen sall come and mae them; and Tommy and Ralph sall hae new suits too; and he sall mend up Christie's claithes, for they're sadly out o' repair; and I'll mend your linen, and get ye a dozen pair o' new stockings o' my ain knitting, and a comforter, and a pair o' worsted gloves, for I mind th' winter's coming on; and ye sall hae a good big-coat wi' a cape to it, and a new hat and shoes, for ye sall na shame ye'r new Lunnon kin, poor bairn! though, what is to become o' lile Katie, when ye're gone, is mair than I can say! And ye sall hae a part of a ham boiled, and a good wheaten loaf, and a big bottle o' beer, and a lile bottle o' elder-wine, and a bit o' cheese, and some nice oat cakes, to tae wi' ye to eat upo' th' road, for its hungry work, travelling! And be sure and write when ye get there; and if ye dinna like 'em, tae notice where th' coach puts up, and come back; for I's sure I's wae to part wi' ye, for ye're like my ain bairn; and, but for Naunty, ye should na gae; but oud folk

are fanciful, and must hae their ain way. But dinna greet; for wae's me, my ain heart is a sair ane!"

Alice did all she promised: she bought him new clothes, which Tommy Allen, the dale tailor, made for him; she mended his linen, and knit him a dozen new pair of stockings, a pair of gloves, and a comforter; he had a new great-coat and hat, a new pair of shoes, and his old ones patched at the toes. He was, in the estimation of every one, extraordinarily well provided for. Half a large ham was boiled, a wheaten loaf made; the nicest oat cakes selected; a large triangle of cheese was cut; the beer and the elder wine, all were ready, and packed in a large basket; and his oaken chest, containing his wardrobe, was brought down stairs. He put on his hitherto Sunday suit, into the waistcoat lining of which Alice carefully stitched two £10 Kendal bank notes, and he had thirty shillings' worth of silver in his pocket, out of which he was to pay his travelling expenses.

Such being the state of affairs, our readers of course will suppose that the time of his departure was at hand. It was, in fact, the last day of the fortnight; he had slept his last sleep at Gibb's Ha', and was to sleep the following night at Willy Parrington's, at the

dale-foot, that he might be ready for his early journey, Willy setting off at three o'clock in the morning.

Poor Felix! to use the true dale phrase, "his heart was wae." He had taken leave of the Rivelin folk, and of the Hodgsons, and the Hibblethwaites; and had even stolen up to say good-bye to Mikky and Elsy Hawes; and was now come back to have tea, and then Christie was to drive him in the cart to the dale-foot. He had given his dog in charge to Ralph, and his goose, his famous "Peggy Punch," to "lile Katie," and there seemed now nothing left to do, but the most sorrowful of all—to part.

"I's two or three words to say to thee, poor dear!" said Alice, as she opened the door at the bottom of the stairs, and motioned him to her. She took him into her own chamber, and shut the door. "I' this press," said she, pointing to a large one, which had been removed from Peggy Hibbledon's chamber, "are a' thy mother's clothes, poor thing! and in three others, that stand about th' house, are a power o' good table and bed-linen, and plate and crockery, a' varra good; and those two picturs upo' Gideon's bed—they are thine! Ivery year I tae a' out th' drawers and presses, and see as a's reeght and dry, and

put 'em by again; and I sall do sae still. And upo' this pillow," said she, unlocking a drawer and taking one out, "ye'r poor, dear mother's head was laid when she died. Wae's me! I dinna think either she or th' Maister would like ye'r leaving us!"—and both she and Felix wept. "But it's nae use greeting," she said, at length, "th' Maister, poor man, would na even lay his ain head upo' this pillow afterwards; he told me why it was sae dear to him, and I promised I would keep it away from ony bed; and when I delivered the things up to ye, I would tell ye a' about it! And now, poor dear, I'll just say again what I've oft said before, come back, if ye dinna like 'em, or if they are nae kind to ye, for I's sure a curse would leeght upon us, if we turned our backs upon ye! And remember, Felix dear, a' the good advice ye'r ain father gave ye, and say ye'r prayers! Dinna forget God, poor bairn, and he winna forget ye! And I's put ye'r mother's Bible—it's varra good print—into ye'r box; and all ye'r father's books I'll tae good care of—the bairns sall na hae 'em to pull about. O! it'll be a sad house when ye're out of it!"

"Dinna let me go!" said Felix, sobbing bitterly; "I's sure I dinna want to gae—I's varra fond o' ye all!"

"Ye'll break my heart if ye talk sae," said

Alice, crying herself with no less emotion; "but nay, nay—gae and see 'em—they're ye'r ain kin—ye'r ain mother's kin, and canna hae the heart to misuse ye!"

The tea was a very mournful meal; nobody could eat anything, excepting Peggy Hibbledon—not even Christie. Gideon sat and cried; and, it having been thought too severe a trial for "lile Katie," she had been carried up to the Rivelin, to be out of the way. On the plea of seeing if the horse was ready, although he had made him ready himself, half an hour before, Christie left the table; and, no sooner was he gone, than Gideon got up, and, touching Felix's shoulder, beckoned him to the back door, and then, taking from behind the pump a walking stick, which the poor creature had, with great labour and no little ingenuity, notched and carved with his knife, put it into his hand. "I's poor Gideon—poor Gideon," said he; "tae that!" and then, bursting into a passion of child-like grief, he ran into the cow-shed. This, then, was poor Gideon's keepsake, and Felix was in no humour, at that moment, to be unmoved. He began to think what he, too, could give to him; his dog and his goose were disposed of; he felt in his pockets—there was nothing but his knife, and to give a knife

was unlucky; and, while he stood in this dilemma, Christie's voice was heard, sternly announcing that "a' was ready, and it would be neeght afore they set off;" so, brushing away his tears as well as he could, he went back into the kitchen, with his new stick in his hand.

In three or four minutes the cart, and Christie, and Felix, and the great basket of eatables, and the box of clothes, were jogging down the hill; and Alice and the children were all standing at the garden gate, looking after them with tears in their eyes; and poor Gideon was crying among the dry fern, which was laid up for fodder, more bitterly than ever.

Christie spoke no word for the greater part of the way, and then, without turning to him, said he "hoped he was warmly wrapped, for the neeghts were noo getting cold." Felix thanked him, and said he was; and so they drove on to Willy Parrington's. "And noo, fare-ye-weel!" said he, after he had delivered his possessions into the trusty hands of Willy, and renewed all needful instructions to him, respecting Felix's London journey; "fare-ye-weel, and God bless ye! ye's been a good bairn, after a', and I's wae I threshed ye!"

Christie's kind words completely overcame

Felix's determination to "greet nae mair," and he could not help thinking that it was very hard, if all liked him so, that he must leave them.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FIRST PART OF A LONG JOURNEY.

It was brightly starlight, at three o'clock on Tuesday morning, the 17th of October, when the little covered cart, with its strong but lightly-built grey horse, started from Willy Parrington's door. Willy was a butter-buyer in the dale, and went every week to Manchester with his purchases. He was, moreover, the regular carrier of light parcels and letters, and had room, beside, for one passenger.

As they drove along, every now and then they were stopped at some lane-end, or gate, or public-house, by those who had commissions for Willy. "I's get ye to tae this bundle o' yarn to Mally Saterthwaite, o' Casterton," said one, "and ye's hae fourpence for ye'r trubble." And, "Pray ye now, Willy, gae to see our Bet, as ye gang through Kirby Lonsda'," said another; "we's heard she been but badly, and she's no but

a weakly body, sae it'll be mair satisfaction if ye'll see her ye'rself; and we's gie ye a quart o' drink!" "Here's twelve shilling and ninepence, I's get ye to pay for twine and tenpenny-nails, to Maister Wilson, o' th' High-street, i' Lankester," said Mrs. Thistlethwaite, a wayside shopkeeper, as, with her nightcap on, and a candle in her hand, she hailed the butter-buyer, out of her chamber window; and then, tying the little packet to the end of a piece of grey worsted, let it down to him as he sat in his cart; "and mind ye, tae a receipt from him," said she, as they drove off again.

The sun shone brightly, and there was an exhilarating freshness and transparency of the atmosphere, that had a sensible effect upon the spirits, as, at seven o'clock in the morning, they entered the pleasant valley of the Lune. Felix, who had never been, in his whole life, farther from the dales than Hawes and Sedburgh, could not resist that most natural wonder of inexperienced travellers, that the world was so wide. At Casterton they made their first halt, and Felix, after assaying his ham and new loaf, which he accompanied by a mess of oatmeal porridge, furnished by the landlady, went out with Willy to deliver the bundle of yarn, and receive other commissions. After an

hour's rest, the little covered cart and the grey horse set off again. They went rattling through the cheerful little town of Kirby Lonsdale, leaving the needful inquiry after "Bet," to Willy's return; and, soon after, came in sight of Morecomb Bay, which, resplendent with sun-light, shone out to the right; beyond which, the rugged shores of Cartmell, and Ulverston, and Walney Isle, with its lighthouse, were distinctly visible. Felix had read of the sea, but he had formed no definite idea of what it was like; and his exclamation, "O, Willy, what a gert tarn!" threw the old man into a fit of laughter.

"It's nae a tarn, bairn," said he, "it's the sea! Yon's Morecomb Bay, and th' other side is a' Cartmel and Ulverston Sands; and lower down, is Lankester Bay; and yon's Lankester Castle at stands upo' th' rock, bigger than ony kirk tower!"

It was quite dusk when they drove through Lancaster; and they only halted to pay "the twelve shilling and nine pence, and tae the receipt;" but the gas-lights in the streets, and the smart shop windows, all lighted up, and people, and carriages, and carts passing along the streets—although Lancaster is not a busy town—astonished and almost bewil-

dered Felix. "I should soon be lost in such a gert place," said he.

"Gert place, ca' ye it?" replied Willy, "it's nobut a village to Manchester; and Lunnon, I've heard say, is as big as ten Manchesters!"

Felix's heart quite sank within him, for he felt that, from a place so large, there would be no chance of his ever getting; and, for the first time in the course of the day, he leaned back in the cart and shed tears.

The grey horse, which, for the last many miles, had gone wearily, now began to amend his pace; for, like the thirsty camel, that smells water, he knew that his place of rest was near. It was at the village of Scotforth, some three miles from Lancaster, that they halted for the night. Felix toasted his oat-cake at the kitchen fire of the little public house there, and, to keep out the cold, and mend his sleep, as Willy recommended, had a basin of mulled beer, and went to bed. At half past two in the morning, the thread, or rather the cable, of his sleep was suddenly snapped in two, though not without difficulty, by Willy Parrington, who, with his red woollen nightcap on his head, and a candle in his hand, told him it was time to be moving,

This day's journey was not unlike the last. It was starlight when they set out; they had the sea on their right hand, as daylight broke upon them, and, to their left, the high bleak extent of Bleasdale Moor; which sent back his thoughts and affections to his native fells. They breakfasted at Garstang, passed through the pleasant town of Preston, with its green meadows, on the banks of the beautiful Ribble, in the afternoon; and again, at nightfall, halted at a way-side public house, five miles short of Chorley. Again, at three o'clock in the morning, after a five hours' rest, they set forth, and breakfasted at the village of Dunbury. In the afternoon they drove through Bolton Le Moors. Here poor Felix fell into a mournful train of thought; for, as he passed through the greater and the less Bolton, with their swarming populations, that saddest of all sensations came over him, that, amid the thousands where he was going, all would be strangers; he felt forlorn and deserted, and a sense of loneliness lay heavy on his heart; and especially so, as, within a few hours, he must part from Willy Parrington, the last tie between him and his beloved dale friends. These were not feelings which the approach to a noisy, bustling, and smoky manufacturing town, at night-fall, was likely

to abate. They drove through Salford, a large town, in Felix's opinion, and yet, Willy told him it was only the beginning of Manchester. Presently the streets became more thronged; the rumble of heavy wains, and the rattle of lighter vehicles, and the rushing past of crowded omnibusses, and cabs, and coaches; the crowds of people that were passing on the pavements; the flaring lights in the shop windows; the numerous seven-storied factories, every one of their numerous windows a-light from within; the babel of human voices, and the jangle and roar of machinery, all created such a confusion and whirl in the poor lad's brain, that, whether he was alive or not, was more than he could tell. He remembered, however, Willy's saying, that London was bigger than ten Manchesters, and, in dismay, he closed his eyes, endeavouring, by obscuring his outward vision, to get rid of the overwhelming idea.

After having threaded, with wonderful adroitness, some of the busiest streets in Manchester, Willy turned into a quiet by-lane, and presently stopped at the sign of the Harrow, kept, he said, "by a dales-woman, a varra graidly body." Willy was a kind, good soul, and, knowing how tired Felix was, he had a quarter of an hour's talk with his

country-woman, mostly about making "the bairn" comfortable, before he rubbed down and bedded his horse; and then went out to see after the London stages. The landlady, whose very heart was gladdened by the sound of the dale tongue, made Felix, in his own opinion, as comfortable as a king's son; having extracted from him, nevertheless, all the news that he could tell of any of the dales.

He was woke from the most profound of sleeps by Willy, as on former mornings, but not till four o'clock; and then, after "a right comfortable" dale breakfast, they set off to the Palace Hotel, whence the coach started. By the way, Felix commissioned the old man with messages to all his dale friends, not forgetting Mikky and Elsy Hawes; he then inquired what would be the cost of a smart cotton handkerchief for the neck; Willy thought about a shilling or fourteen pence; and Felix, giving him half-a-crown, desired him to buy such a one for Gideon; and "tell him," said he, "to wear it on Sundays, for my sake; and, wi' th' change, buy some gingerbread and spice-cake for Ralph, and lile Katie, and th' other bairns." Willy promised to do so; and, by this time, they had threaded a dozen narrow streets, and passed

along half a dozen broad ones, and now arrived at the inn, where no less than three other coaches also, some going north, and others south, were about to start. It was a scene of animation and bustle, such as Felix had not witnessed before. The broad street seemed almost filled by the coaches, and those whom they had drawn together. There were waiters from the inn, seeing that well-paying guests were comfortably seated; there were porters, old and young, trotting along, and bending under heavy luggage of all descriptions—portmanteaus, carpet-bags, leather trunks, and deal-boxes, and the owners themselves bustling up after; gentlemen great-coated, with cloaks over their arms, and ladies muffled up in silk cloaks, with boas about their necks, all impatient of time; and, besides these, were early street-loungers, not a few, who had stopped on their onward way, to see the four coaches start upon their several routes.

Although there were four coaches to hold them, Felix wondered how so many people who had presented, and were presenting themselves as claimants for room, could ever have seats found for them; and something like this fear must have crossed Willy Parrington's mind also, for he said, "Ye'd mappen

better mae sure o' ye'r seat, while there's ony room left. I see ye'r basket and ye'r box safe i' th' coach office; I carried 'em up last night mysel: and sae just let me help ye up. Nay, this is ye'r coach," said he, seeing Felix go up to the one that was bound for Carlisle; "and I know the driver; he's a Kendal man, and a varra graidly body; and I's told him about ye, and he'll mae friends for ye wi' th' other coachman as taes his place for th' neight, at Leicester; and I's paid ye'r fare, and gied him two shillings for's trubble; and here's ye'r change, just half a crown, and put it safe i' ye'r pocket. Now get up! ye'll sit behind mair safe—there! beside that decent young woman i' th' plaidy shawl;—now keep the middle o' th' seat! Be sae ob-leeging, will ye, sir," said he, to a stout, respectable-looking person, who, according to the amount of the fee, would have been *gentleman* or *man* with the coachman, and who slowly mounted, as soon as Felix was seated, "as to let th' bairn hae th' middle o' th' seat." The reply was, that he certainly would. "Ye's mappen ganging a' th' way to Lunnon?" said Willy. "I am!" was the reply; "have you any commissions?" "Why, sir," returned Willy, "th' bairn's ganging there too, and he's niver been fra hame

afore; and ye's mappen speak a kind word to him, noo and then!" The stranger said that he would, and looked at Felix, and smiled kindly.

This being thus arranged, very much to Willy's satisfaction, he saw the oaken box safely deposited in the back boot, of which he did not fail to apprise the owner, and had the basket, containing the remains of the eatables, and the two bottles, put within reach, on the top of the coach.

The stable-boys now were putting forth their hands to slide off the clothes from the horses, the moment the coachman, who was on his box, had gathered up his reins; and Willy's voice addressed Felix with a "Fare-ye-weel, bairn! fare-ye-weel, and a good journey to ye!" It was with a husky voice that Felix replied; but it did not matter; the sound would have been lost, had it been ever so clear, in the clattering starting off of four coaches at one and the same moment.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SECOND PART OF A LONG JOURNEY,
AND THE JOURNEY'S END.

It was a very uneventful journey, at least inasmuch as no horse was killed, no passenger fell off the coach, no wheel took fire, and the axle-tree did not break. Poor Alice might have spared all her fears; and so Felix thought, for after the first five minutes, when he had somewhat accustomed his eye to the rapid succession of objects, he began to think it very pleasant, and to find great amusement in seeing houses, bridges, churches, nay, even woods and fields, wearing aspects quite different to anything in Dent-dale. It was vastly preferable to Willy Parrington's cart, because he had so much more clear and extended a view over the country. The young woman, too, in the tartan shawl, was very pretty, and very much disposed to be friendly, and the stout person on his right was even more so. He talked with Felix about almost everything they saw; told him the towns they went through, and the names of the gentlemen whose seats they passed. And when they stopped for dinner, at the pretty little Derbyshire town of Bakewell, he

insisted that Felix should dine. Felix, like a prudent lad, thought of his finances, and said that he had plenty in his basket. "Nonsense!" said his stout friend, "that's lasted, you say, for the last three days—I'll pay for your dinner!" It would be ungracious, Felix thought, to demur any longer, and therefore he had a dinner at the cost of him, who seemed not only to have plenty of money, but who also seemed to like the doing of a kind action, and shall therefore be called the stout *gentleman*.

No whit abating of his kindness, although Felix had cost him three shillings, they reached Leicester at eight o'clock, where everybody took tea, and made preparations for the night-journey. Old gentlemen tied down the ears of their travelling caps, and put on their extra coats and cloaks; ladies twined their boas twice round their necks, and tied the ends; and those female travellers on the outside, who only claimed the appellation of *women*, took out such shawls or warm woollen handkerchiefs as they had brought for the purpose, and disposed them about their heads or their persons, as, according to their notions, would best keep out the night air. "We shall have a cold night," said the stout gentleman to the young woman, Felix's left hand companion, who

now stood with them in the little parlour, where the outside passengers had taken their tea, "and I hope you have plenty of wrapping!" But he need have had no fear about her, for she had produced, from somewhere, a large fur tippet, which she was just then putting on, and over which she threw, the next moment, a very warm and well-lined cloak. "Oh, you'll do, I see," said he; "I was going to offer you my mackintosh. And how are you off, my little friend?" said he, turning to Felix, who was again tying on the red comforter, which he had taken from his neck while he had his tea; "Have you nothing beside this?" said he, eying the red comforter with something like disdain. "My coat's very warm, sir," replied Felix, feeling almost chivalrous about the clothes which his friend Alice had provided for him. "Phoo! phoo!" replied the stout traveller, and, the next moment, he forcibly buttoned, first a large broad-cloth cape about his neck, and then his ample extra mackintosh, which swept the floor. "You must hold it up," said he, "till you have taken your seat, and then it will keep your feet warm. I wonder what people would do," continued he, as he wrapped his own neck and chin in a large cotton shawl, "if

I didn't find capes and cloaks for them when I travel!"

Felix felt half afraid his friend had defrauded himself of some of his needful habiliments, but he soon saw that there was no need for anxiety; for, in addition to the great-coat of the day, he produced a huge, rough, double-breasted coat, into which, by the help of a waiter, he thrust his large person, and then, putting a close-fitting silk night-cap on his head, he forced on his hat, and declared himself ready for his journey.

"We shall keep one another warm," said the young woman, laughing; and, all three being in very good humour, and very comfortable, after their warm tea, they mounted to their back seat, and, by dint of a little extra squeezing, felt themselves in as good travelling trim as they had been in the whole course of the day.

It was not till they got to the next stage, and Felix saw the new coachman, who had dismounted, and was now again drawing on his huge gloves, that he remembered that they had parted with the "varra graidly body;" and he wondered, with a very appalling dread, whether the new coachman knew anything about him. "Not he, indeed, I dare say," returned his stout companion; "but don't

trouble yourself—I shall stay a day in London, and the Belle Sauvage will do very well for me; and I'll take care of you till your friends come."

"Thank you, sir," returned Felix; "but I daresay they'll meet me."

"In that case," said the other, "you'll do very well without the coachman."

It was a cold, raw night, and, but for the stranger's munificence, Felix would have suffered miserably; and, towards morning, it began to rain. The young woman, however, had a good, large umbrella, under which Felix was screened, and the stranger produced, from the capacious pocket of his upper coat, a mackintosh hood, which he put on, looking, for all the world, like an Esquimaux under a seal-skin. Thus, spite of the rain, they travelled on comfortably enough, excepting for that listless weariness which a night journey produces on the unaccustomed traveller, and which, in Felix's case, was united to anxiety about his new home, and the forlorn consciousness, that when he had said good-bye to this kind chance-companion, he should be once more in a world of strangers; and, the nearer he approached London, the more oppressive seemed the melancholy that was weighing down his heart.

It was half-past five o'clock when they drew up at the Angel, Islington; but, in the pouring rain, and the dreary atmosphere, how little did that early-morning first specimen of London, answer any of his preconceptions! That "London streets were paved with *gold*," had been sung to him in his earlier years; *mud* would have been far more correct, thought he, as he saw it splash right and left, as they drove the whole length of Goswell-street, and those which succeeded it, before they reached the Belle Sauvage. It was then half-past six, and nearly light; yet, everything looked dingy, and comfortless, and dripping with wet; and the waiters, who came to offer their attentions to the passengers, seemed themselves afraid of turning out of doors.

The stout gentleman from Felix's right hand had got down, and the young woman sat under her umbrella, busied by putting sundry things into her black silk bag, when a kind voice at the coach side inquired, "Is there anybody here belonging to me?"

"Yes," said poor Felix, jumping instantly to the conclusion that it was Mr. Le Smith.

"Down with you, then, in a jiffy," replied the very pleasant-countenanced young man to whom the voice belonged, "for I've had a hackney coach waiting an hour."

Felix began to dismount, overjoyed to think that Mr. Le Smith was such a one.

“Heigh ho!” said the young man, helping Felix down, nevertheless, “is there nobody else?”

“I’m coming, James!” said the young woman, who had now arranged all to her satisfaction, and put down her umbrella; and, the next moment, the two friends, or relations, met with the most cordial affection. This, then, was not Mr. Le Smith! and poor Felix felt not only grievously disappointed, but ashamed, for he thought he had made a very awkward blunder.

“There’s no Mr. Le Smith here at present,” said the stout gentleman, returning to the back of the coach; “but I’ve got a nice snug parlour, with a warm fire in it, and ordered breakfast; we’ll go in and enjoy ourselves!” Felix felt both disappointed and relieved; disappointed that his friends were not as punctual as other people’s, and relieved, because he somehow feared to find Mr. Le Smith different to the young man with the pleasant voice. His basket and his oaken box being now taken from the coach, together with the other’s luggage, and ordered into the little parlour where they were to breakfast, they followed it, not, however, till,

after having been shown into separate chambers, by the stout gentleman's orders, they washed well with warm water, from which Felix, and no doubt his friend, experienced the most comfortable results.

After breakfast, no Mr. Le Smith still making his appearance, the stout gentleman told Felix that he himself was an old stager, and that a night-journey was nothing to him, but that he must lie down in the great chair by the fire and sleep; that he would, in the meantime, read the morning papers and write letters, for he did not care to go out till afternoon, when he was going to the packet-office, being on his way to Hamburgh. Felix needed not to be told twice to sleep, for he had been nodding for the last half hour, and had kept his eyes open only from respect to his friend.

It was twelve o'clock, when the room door was thrown open by a waiter, and Mr. Le Smith announced. Felix was woke by the sound of his entrance, and beheld a stout red-faced man, in rather rusty black, the expression of whose countenance was selfish and cunning, and made still more displeasing by a great quantity of ill-kept black hair. Felix's fellow-traveller, who was a person of no consequence, in Mr. Le Smith's eyes,

was therefore very unceremoniously greeted, while he welcomed Felix, without any apology for his tardiness, with a poor joke, about doing at Rome as the Romans do, and thus commencing his London life by turning day into night; then ringing the bell, and ordering in a glass of spirits and water, with a slight movement to the old traveller, said he would drink it, and look at the paper, while Felix got ready. Felix put on his great-coat and comforter, and stood with his hat in his hand; but, had he known what his sagacious coach-companion's thoughts were, he would have felt greater disinclination to accompany him than he did. Felix took out his remaining change, to pay for his breakfast, but his friend refused, adding, that he was heartily welcome; and that, if ever he were staying in London, he would call upon him—looking significantly at Mr. Le Smith, as for an address. Le Smith understood him very well, but he only made a cold bow, and bade Felix follow him.

“Good-bye, and thank you, sir,” said Felix, really sorry to part from him. “Good-bye, my dear fellow!” said the other; adding, as the door closed after them, “If yon’s an honest man, my name’s not John Page!”

“Eighteen pence for your glass, if you

please, sir," said a waiter to Le Smith, as he advanced towards the door. "Ha! yes," replied he, "but I must speak with this young gentleman in a private room."

"You can walk in here, sir," said the waiter, opening a door.

"Well," said Le Smith, the moment the door was closed, "I hope you have brought some money with you."

"Yes," replied Felix, "but it's stitched into the lining of my waistcoat."

"Twenty pounds?" said the other.

"Yes," was Felix's reply.

"It will never do for you to carry so much about with you in London," said Le Smith; "you'll get robbed! Off with your coat, and I'll keep the money safe for you!"

Mr. Le Smith was not half as long in getting the two £10 notes out of the waistcoat-lining, as Alice had been sewing them in; and, with evident satisfaction, he thrust them down deep into his trousers-pocket.

"Upon my word," said he, as if at that moment just become aware of an unpleasant fact, "I'm come without my purse! Have you any loose change about you?"

Felix felt afraid of him, and he submissively answered, that he had only one half-crown.

“Oh, that will do!” said Le Smith; “I’ll give it you again, when we get home; Mrs. Le Smith always has change!”

The glass of spirits and water was paid for, the basket and the box given into the hands of a dirty little boy, who proffered himself as porter, the moment they entered the street; and, in five minutes, Felix Law had arrived at his new home.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE NEW HOME AND ITS INMATES.

It was to one of the meanest houses in Harp Alley, Farringdon-street, that Mr. Le Smith led Felix. He knocked twice at the door, and very furiously the second time, before it was opened, and then he was very angry that they had been kept waiting so long. The woman who opened the door was Mrs. Le Smith herself; and into her hands he consigned Felix, saying he must needs be tired after so long a journey, and had better go to bed; adding, that he had gentlemen waiting for him, and must therefore now go away, nor should be back before evening. It was well for Felix that he had no very exalted ideas of what the Le Smiths would be; and yet, had his ex-

pectations been the most extravagant in the world, his dismay could hardly have been greater than it was, when he saw his new home and its inmates. Of Mr. Le Smith we have spoken—let us now introduce his wife. She was young, certainly, but with marks of premature age in her countenance; at one time she might have been pretty, but her eyes and cheeks were hollow and faded, and there were wrinkles and furrows on her brow, and about her mouth, which told of sorrow, anxiety, and an uneasy temper. Such a countenance Felix had never seen; so young, and yet so haggard; wearing smiles, yet so wanting of peace! Her dress was shabby, yet tawdry; she was evidently dressed-up for the day, and intended to honour her guest. She wore many long, ill-curved ringlets, and had on a dirty cap, of red and black gauze, in the front of which was a large brooch of Bristol stones, showily set. Her gown was of green silk, but much worn and greased, yet fashionably made, and flounced and trimmed with cheap lace. The room into which he was taken was quite accordant with its mistress; and, as Felix declined to eat anything, he was left in it alone, while she went to prepare his bed. Such a room as that he had never before seen, for there were none such in the dales. There was a cracked

glass in an old gilt frame, over the mantelpiece, and the walls were stencilled in a showy, but very coarse pattern. There were two sofas in the room, with different cotton covers—dirty, faded, torn, and ill put on; a work-table, with a dingy green silk bag; and a tea-caddy, the lid of which was broken, and a flute, tied round with strong thread, lying upon it; half a dozen old hair-bottomed chairs; a Pembroke table in the middle, covered with a dirty cloth; and on the floor, a large-patterned, but much worn, Brussels carpet, with a rug that did not match. Everything looked dirty, tawdry, and ill kept, and produced the most dispiriting effect upon the mind.

Presently Mrs. Le Smith told him his room was ready, bidding him bring up his box; which he did readily, remarking that he needed clean linen.

“Oh Lord! you must be careful about washing,” said she; “I daresay it’s cheap in Yorkshire, but in London it’s a horrid price!”

If the room down stairs had surprised Felix, how much more must the chamber into which he was taken, accustomed, as he was, to the amply furnished and clean chambers of his dale friends; for in it was no furniture whatever, excepting a small French bed, without drapery, and a chair with a

broken back, upon which stood an ill-matched basin and ewer.

"I hope you'll have a comfortable sleep," said Mrs. Le Smith, opening the bed for him, upon which, however, there were clean sheets; "and when would you like me to wake you?" asked she, standing with the door in her hand. Felix replied, that he did not know; and, after waiting a few moments, seeing he had not decided, she repeated that she hoped he would sleep comfortably, and left him.

Felix sat down upon his box, and began to cry. He felt how abject the place and the people were; that he was abandoned of all his friends, and utterly forlorn; and nothing but a paroxysm of tears seemed able to relieve his heart. And yet, what good could tears do? So he thought, and, with an impatience that almost urged him to rush from the house, and claim the kindness of any stranger, he walked hastily about the room. He looked through the window. What a cheerless and disheartening prospect! He thought of Alice, and Linn's Gill, and again he burst into tears. After a while, he threw himself upon the bed, and sleep must have stolen upon him, for when he raised himself, in the belief that he had lain there but a short time, it was getting dusk, and he felt that

uneasy sensation of body—say nothing of depression of mind—which sleep at an unusual hour produces.

The dismal chamber looked even more dismal in the dusk; and hoping, at all events, to find fire below, for he was also miserably chilled, he went again down stairs. Mrs. Le Smith was there, and with her the child, of whom the father had spoken in his letter. The first thing that cheered his heart in this doleful abode was the sight of a child; but even that partook of the character of the place. Felix almost started back when he took a closer survey of the poor little creature. Like many another, born and bred in the unwholesome nooks of London, it had a meagre, withered, and almost skeleton-like aspect. It was two years old, but it had only very imperfectly the use of its limbs, which were most painfully attenuated. The pitiable aspect of the child was, however, made more striking by its miserable adornments. Its thin hair was tortured into angular curls, and its sleeves, revealing its slender bony arms, were looped up with dirty ribbon. Felix thought of "lile Katie," and her two robust, strong-limbed little brothers; and yet he tried to make acquaintance with this, whom her mother called "Miss Julia."

Such was Felix Law's new home, and such were its inmates; and nothing could be more melancholy.

Mr. LeSmith had been bred to the law; but, having been guilty of malpractices in his profession, had been prohibited pursuing it. Yet nevertheless, he did occasionally find clients, and, by one means or another, contrived to gain a miserable subsistence. Nothing could have been more fortunate for him than thus gaining possession of Felix. His only regret was, that with him he received but forty pounds. However, he hoped, by one means or another, to get Linn's Gill sold, and the purchase-money into his own hands. During the time he contrived to keep out of prison, he might generally be found at a certain public-house in Holborn, where he saw his clients and took his dinner, returning home in the evening, when, if his temper was good, which was the same thing as saying he had money in his pocket, he would take his wife to one of the minor theatres; if bad, as was most frequently the case, a scene of domestic bickering and warfare commenced. Again we say, could any thing be more melancholy than to be a member of such a household!

It was not long before the confinement of

the situation, the altered food, and general way of life, and, above all, the want of regular employment, to say nothing of the want of affection and sympathy, began to produce their effects upon Felix. It is true, he persuaded Mrs. Le Smith to go out with him, promising to carry Julia all the way, and, by degrees, came even to venture out himself; and thus, before he had been many weeks a resident in Harp Alley, he knew the whole length of streets from the commencement of Holborn to the Mansion House; Farringdon Street, and all the way down to Blackfriar's Bridge; and the whole length of the Strand and Fleet Street; he had gone round, and even into St. Paul's; watched the boys play at Christ Church Hospital, and wished he was one of them; and had even ventured, more than once, short as the days were, to the Post Office, to see the mail coaches start. He knew where the baker lived, that brought the daily loaf; and from what public-house the daily pot of porter came: he knew where the butcher lived, and the grocer, and went very often into Farringdon Market, to buy vegetables. There was some degree of pleasure in all this; he was amazed with all he saw, and his eager curiosity, and the delight he expressed, made

Mrs. Le Smith persuade her husband, one night, to take them to the play, and to go down to Greenwich with them one Sunday. But spite of these little glimpses of pleasure, Felix resolved with himself to write to Gibb's Ha' and relate all, believing that he had only to do so in order to insure his recall, even from Christie himself; but one difficulty always stood in his way—he had neither pen, ink, nor paper; and at last he determined to ask money from Mrs. Le Smith, wherewith to purchase them.

“Oh, Lord!” exclaimed she, when he made his request, “I’ve no money!” Felix mentioned what Mr. Le Smith had said about her always having change, when he borrowed his half-crown.

“But you’ve more money than that half-crown!” said Mrs. Le Smith. Felix related how her husband had taken it from the lining of his waistcoat.

“Good gracious!” exclaimed she, “then there’s an end of your money for ever! What a wretch that man is!” continued she; “why, if he’d all the Bank of England, he’d spend it! He’d five hundred pounds with me; and, bless you! it was all gone in four months, and I hadn’t a sixpence of it! My father was Mrs. Rudy’s brother; and, if it hadn’t

been for her, we should have starved. Get down, Miss!" said she, in the irritation of growing passion, pushing the feeble child from her knee, "what an everlasting plague you are!"

Felix took the meagre little creature, who began to cry, on his knee, and Mrs. Le Smith continued—"Lord bless me! and so you were such a fool as to give him all that money! Now remember, sir, that you give the next to me!"

"Oh!" said Felix, speaking the wish that was uppermost in his mind, "I think I sha'n't stay here long! I want to go back to Dent-dale!" And hereupon his full heart came to his eyes, and he wept, for the first time, in the presence of Mrs. Le Smith.

The next day Mr. Le Smith, in a manner unusually kind, told Felix, that if he wished to write to his dale friends, he now might do it, as he himself was about sending to them, and could enclose a letter; and that pen, ink, and paper were accordingly at his service. Poor Felix felt wonderfully grateful; and the next day wrote, carefully sealed, and directed the following letter, to Alice o' Christie's o' Gibb's Ha,' Dent-dale.

“ DEAREST FRIEND,

“ I am sure I might call you mother, for so I feel you to be! How very unhappy I have been since I left you! I am sure if I were to live in London a hundred years, I should never like it. Willy Parrington would tell you all about our journey to Manchester. I got to London by the coach very well, and met with a very kind gentleman; he paid for my dinner and breakfast. Oh how I wish he had been Mr. Le S.—you know who I mean. I am very sorry to send you a dismal letter, because I know Christie wishes me to live in London, and you wish me to be happy; but I must speak my mind to you, for there is nobody else in the world that I can speak plainly and truly to.

“ We live in a very dirty, close lane, and the air is so thick, that the sun hardly ever shines; we have no garden nor yard, and if one wants a breath of fresh air, one must go into the streets, and they are so dirty you can’t think. One thing always makes me very sorrowful—there are so many jails all about us;—there’s the great Fleet Prison, and Newgate, and the Old Bailey, and Bridewell; and there have been some men hanged since I came. Sometimes, when I go into better streets, and see people handsomely

dressed, with their pretty children, I think, if there was but anybody here to love me, I could be very happy; but then, I think of you, and Katie, and Ralph, and I wish I had but wings to fly to you, and never see London again! I try to love Mrs. Le Smith and Julia, but someway trying to love never makes me happy; I suppose if I lived long enough with them I should love them; but, my very dear friend, this is what I want to know, whether I may not come back to Dent-dale. I am sure if Christie were to hear Mr. Le S. swear, or were to see him, he would not wish me to live here. I cannot think him my own mother's cousin, and yet I think he means to be kind to me; for, as soon as he knew I wanted to write to you, he let me; but I would rather be scolded by Christie and Naunty than live here. Tell Christie that I will look after the sheep better than ever I did, if you will only let me come back. You will think this letter very blotty, but it is with my tears. I cannot help crying when I think of you.

“ I think if I had my knitting I should be much more happy. Mrs. Le Smith does not know how to knit, and she laughs at me about it; but I know the baker's wife, who is a very nice woman, and I mean to ask her

to buy me some yarn and needles, for I think I could get some money by knitting. Mr. Le S. had all my money; he took it out of my waistcoat as soon as I came. I never saw money so much wanted as it is here; but everything is bought in London, even sticks to light the fire; and I don't believe he has a bag full of sovereigns in his desk, like Christie. I hope I am not ungrateful, for sometimes I think they mean to be kind to me; but I am sure if my father had known them, he never would have wished Christie to send me here. We never go to church; and Mr. Le S. drinks a great deal; but perhaps it is the way in London, for they call me very inexperienced. They thought my way of talking very queer; and Mrs. Le S. could not bear to hear me speak, at first.

“ I say my prayers every night and morning, and I never forget you all, my dear friends in Dent-dale. I hope you will let me hear some time from you, and say that I may come back. I often feel passionate and angry here; I am afraid of growing wicked; and it often makes me very miserable. I should laugh if I got back to Gibb's Ha', but in this dismal place I never shall laugh again. I have written you a very long letter, and I shall wait with great impatience for your

answer. You must direct to me at No. —, Harp Alley, Farringdon Street.

“ Give my dearest love to them all, and to Christie if he please.

“ And so, my dear, dear friend, I am your affectionate
“ FELIX LAW.”

When Felix handed the above letter, duly sealed and directed, to Mr. Le Smith, he humbly inquired when it would go, and when he might expect an answer. “ I shall send to-day,” replied Le Smith, “ but your dale friends are slow correspondents; if you get an answer this day six months you may be satisfied.” Felix sighed, for he well knew what a difficult task letter-writing was at Gibb’s Ha’.

Now, my readers, I doubt not, will readily imagine what it never came into the mind of Felix, little as he liked the Le Smiths, to conceive, that this letter was first of all to be inspected by Mr. Le Smith—in fact was designed by this artful man to obtain a knowledge of the boy’s sentiments towards him. The contents of the letter, although they did not greatly surprise him, failed not to make him excessively angry; and in the spirit of this anger, he had a malicious pleasure in the treachery of his conduct. Felix’s letter

was burnt; and, a few days after, Christie o' Gibbs Ha' read the following to his wife:—

“DEAR SIR,

“London, March 25, 183—

“I shall thank you to make me, at your earliest convenience, the remittance now due, viz. one quarter's payment, of ten pounds. Your friend Felix is extremely well, and perfectly happy. Mrs. Le Smith and he like each other greatly; in fact, you must not be jealous if we steal his affections from you. He already talks of selling Linn's Gill.

“With compliments to Mrs. Swithenbank, I am, dear sir, your obedient servant,

“THEODORE LE SMITH.”

“*To Christopher Swithenbank, Esq.*”

“Ye need na fear th' bairn's breaking his heart to come back, ye see,” said Christie, after he had finished this letter.

“Aweel!” replied Alice, sighing, “I have na forgotten him sae soon as he's forgotten me!”

“Ye'd na reeght to expect ought better from him,” said Naunty; “a lazy, good-for-nought, unthankful bairn as he was!”

“Nay, nay!” said Alice, “that he niver was! but mappen those fine Lunnon folk may corrupt him!—and he's sent na love to

us!" exclaimed she, the next moment, half angrily.

"And talks o' selling Linn's Gill!" exclaimed Christie; "th' young fool! such a bit o' good land as that!"

"Aweel," replied Alice, "that comes o' sending him sae far away. If he takes ony wrang ways, I sall always lay it at ye'r door, Naunty!"

Such a speech as this had never come from Alice's lips before; but she was bitter with disappointment. A combat of angry opinions raged at Gibb's Ha' in consequence; and, had Le Smith seen the effect of his letter, even he would have been satisfied.

CHAPTER XVII.

FELIX hoped that, in a fortnight, he might expect an answer, and accordingly he determined, during that time, to possess his mind in patience; and, in order still further to enable him to do so, he resolved to apply, as he had often thought of doing, to Mrs. Rudy, for the means of purchasing knitting materials. He knew she was a very kind-hearted woman, because she supplied them with the

daily quartern loaf, on the easy terms of no payment; and she had, moreover, greatly admired his knit stockings, and expressed her desire to get such. He went up stairs, therefore, to put on his better hat and jacket, in order that, as a petitioner, he might look his best in good Mrs. Randy's eyes, when he made a most appalling discovery—his best suit of clothes and his hat were gone! He turned over the little bed, and even lifted up the broken chair, to see if they were hidden anywhere—but no!—they were clean gone; and, full of amazement and dismay, he ran down to Mrs. Le Smith with the astounding intelligence. There was something in her manner which he could not comprehend, at the first mention of his loss; and an indistinct suspicion crossed his mind, that she knew something about it. But when, afterwards, she solemnly protested her astonishment and disbelief of the fact, and went up stairs with him, and enacted a search, which seemed zealous and sincere, he was quite imposed upon.

“It's that vile Irishwoman,” said she, “who staid in the house while we went to the play, that has stolen them; but she shall never again come near the place!”

Felix said he would find out where she lived, and go to her; but this Mrs. Le Smith

objected to, saying she would get them back for him, or, failing to do so, would persuade her husband to buy him a new suit.

But very little consolation came with this promise, for he had learnt, long before, that Mrs. Le Smith had small influence with her husband; and, cheated and impoverished as he felt himself to be, instead of going to good Mrs. Rudy's, he sat down in his chamber and cried; and, in the depths of his heart, felt such disgust against Irish women, and the Le Smiths, as became almost hatred and malice.

"Oh, I am very wicked!" groaned out the poor boy, at length; "I never felt in this way at Gibb's Ha', except once, and that was when Christie beat me!" And then the sweet thought of little Katie, following him to the solitary barn, and clasping him round the neck, came to his mind, and he felt even yet more wretched.

Just about the time that the fortnight had expired, an important event occurred at No. —. The landlord seized upon their goods for rent, and Mr. Le Smith, spite of Christie's remittance, which had duly come, was thrown into the Fleet prison for debt. It was no very unusual thing, as we have said, for him to be an inhabitant of this place; and there-

fore his wife was not as much distressed as Felix thought she ought to be. But a removal was absolutely necessary; and Mrs. Rundy, as on former occasions, after many angry reproaches, and vows that she would not advance a single penny for her niece, promised to pay for a couple of meanly furnished upper rooms in Shoe Lane.

Lest, by the removal from Harp Alley, he might lose his hoped-for letter, Felix made the letter-carrier acquainted with his present residence—but no letter ever came; and Mr. Le Smith, who feared that, now he was removed from the control of Felix, he might be writing to his friends, told him, one day, when he went to the prison with a message from his wife, that he had had a letter from his Dent-dale friends, and that they were all well, but that Christie did not wish Felix to write; in fact, he desired he should not do so, because it cost so much in postage. Felix's heart died within him, at what seemed this new proof of Christie's unkindness, and he felt cut off from his friends for ever.

"Oh, sir!" exclaimed he, with his eyes full of tears, "but did Alice send no message?"

"There was no other message than what I have given you," replied Le Smith, regardless of the anguish he inflicted.

“But will you please sir, nevertheless, to give my very dear love to them,” said Felix, “when you write?”

“Yes, yes,” replied Le Smith. Thus were all Felix’s hopes of intelligence from his friends cruelly blasted.

A year and a half went on, and the course of the Le Smiths was downward—a downward course of degradation and ruin. Le Smith still continued in prison, the remittances, which Christie duly made, being received for him by some accomplice, kept from the knowledge of his creditors, and appropriated to his own indulgence, and the scanty maintenance of his wife and child.

There had been, long, no attempt to conceal from Felix the fact, that poverty was heavy upon them; and the very want of necessaries at length sent him to Mrs. Rudy with his former petition. The good woman had long distinguished Felix by her favour; and, although she professed scepticism as to a boy’s ability to knit, she yet furnished him with the needful requisites. In about a week, he presented her with a very well shaped, and regularly knit pair of yarn stockings, with which not even Peggy Hibbledon could have found fault. Mrs. Rudy was delighted; and, from this time forth, knitting

was his hourly occupation. Mrs. Le Smith, seeing thus that a new bread-winner had sprung up, began to make herself very easy about the future, and to spend, more freely, the occasional sovereigns which she received from her husband.

But while Felix was working hard, to maintain these worthless people, a most painful and terrible fact came to his knowledge. He was one night roused by a cry of fire, from the sitting-room in which Mrs. Le Smith and the child slept, and, rushing in, he saw the hangings on fire, and Mrs. Le Smith looking strangely vacant, unable to stand, and her dress wofully disordered. He had not lived nearly two years in London, without becoming familiar with that most melancholy and degrading spectacle, a woman intoxicated with gin.

“Oh Heavens! she’s drunk!” exclaimed he, in a tone of utter disgust, to the woman of the house, and some of the other lodgers, who had succeeded in extinguishing the flames.

“Lord!” said she, “to be sure! She’s drunk every night!” And then, as if it was a mere matter of course, helped her on the bed, and laid beside her the terrified and miserable little child, which, midnight as it was, was still wearing its day-clothes.

Felix understood now, many things which had hitherto been mysterious. The mother and child were both victims to that curse of the lower class—gin, and he determined, if possible, to reclaim them; but, in Mrs. Le Smith's case, the attempt was vain. This melancholy labour of Christian love was, however, productive of some small glimmerings of happiness to him, in throwing the child upon his care and love. Not a day passed but he carried her out, turning her attention to every passing object of interest; and, with his knitting in his hands, within doors, ransacked the stores of his memory, and set his invention to work, to contribute to her amusement. The unhappy mother, finding Felix willing to take charge of the child, was selfishly rejoiced, more especially as with him she was contented and happy.

Time went on; and poor Mrs. Le Smith, now become shameless in the indulgence of her appetite for the poison which was killing her, might be seen, with inflamed eyes and hollow cheeks, the picture of squalor and drunkenness, reeling from the gin-palace, at the bottom of Holborn Hill, to her miserable home in Shoe Lane, an object of pity and shame to many a passenger, and of disgust and derision to others.

It was now mid-winter, and drearily cold.

None but the poor, ill-clothed, and ill-fed, as were Felix and his meagre little companion, ever knew the real discomforts of that season. Wealthy ladies were sitting in their well-appointed morning rooms, clothed in their rich silks and woollen garments, with their feet, warmly shod, upon soft rugs, before blazing fires, employed upon their never-ceasing worsted work—reading their amusing books, or devising expensive dresses for the evening's dance, when Felix Law, in his thin, thread-bare, and out-at-the-elbow suit, and with a pair of old shoes, considerably too large for him, secured to his feet as best might be, walked out, to get, cold as it was, a mouthful of fresh air, with his helpless little charge in his arms, about whose neck might be seen, carefully wrapped, that very red woollen comforter which Alice had provided him with, two winters before. The child, which was four years old, was not heavier than a stout infant of six months; but there was something inconceivably affecting in the sallow, bony hands, and the quiet melancholy countenance, with its large sunken eyes, full of anxiety and unnatural experience. There is no human countenance indicative of suffering, so pitiable as such a one.

Mrs. Le Smith was on her bed, a fearful

object of life wasting before the most insatiable of appetites. She was become now incapable of looking after her contracted household duties. "She was on the very brink of the pit," as Mrs. Rundy remarked to one of her neighbours. The doctor averred that not even abstinence from the fatal liquor could now save her; "and so," said Mrs. Rundy, "I'll e'en let her have a drop or two now and then through the day, just to bring on sleep, and make her comfortable." She had just had that "drop or two," when Felix and the child went out, willing to change the stifling and mephitic atmosphere of that doleful chamber, for the keen wind, which blew down Chancery Lane.

It was on a Friday morning—let no one henceforth say that Friday is unlucky—and the forlorn children, after they had gone once up and once down, were seated, Julia on his knee, with one ghastly arm round his neck, on the third step of a certain barrister's door. Felix knew that, in a few minutes, a policeman would come and bid him not be sitting on any gentleman's steps; but still he sat there, for his mind was cast back to the dales of Yorkshire, where he could fancy he saw the frozen beck, with boys "laking" upon it; the brown fell-side, and the sheep driven

down to the lower pastures for food. It did not look winterly there, nevertheless; it was like a garden of Eden! People passed up and down the pavement; lawyers and lawyers' clerks; counsellors in their wigs and gowns; serjeants-at-law; ladies; children and servants. All this Felix saw, but he observed nothing; when, all at once, spite of his day-dream, his attention was arrested by the countenance of a tall and stout lady, wrapped in velvets and fur, who, with another, much shorter, was walking quickly up the pavement. At once he forgot the frozen beck and the brown fells, in fixed attention to that countenance, or rather those eyes, so large, so mild, so affectionate. They were fixed upon him and the child, and his heart glowed with unbounded reverence and affection;—yet the lady walked on with her companion.

“Did you see those children, Miss Horton?” said she, after a minute or two, to her companion.

“No!—where?” was the reply.

“I had nothing but gold,” said the lady, “or I must have given them something; and yet they did not beg!”

“Oh, you are children-mad, you know,” said her companion, laughing.

“ I shall never forget those countenances,” continued the other. “ Such, telling of patient suffering, I never saw ! ”

Felix looked after them as long as they were in sight; and then a police-man told him to move off; and, settling the child in his arms, he moved down the pavement in his miserable shoes. He was about fifty yards from the Fleet Street end of Chancery Lane, when the lady, who had now parted from her companion, came behind him.

“ Is the child ill, my boy ? ” asked she, looking into his face, with such an expression as an angel of mercy, or his own mother, might have worn. Felix’s eyes swam with tears, yet he replied readily, that she was no worse than common.

“ I should like to know something about you,” said the lady. “ Perhaps you think me very impertinent,” added she, smiling, seeing that he hesitated to reply.

But he replied earnestly, that he could not think her impertinent.

“ Well, where is your home ? ” asked she. Felix again hesitated, for he knew not whether to say Dent-dale or Shoe Lane.

Without interpreting this seeming reluctance to answer to his disadvantage, she remarked that, standing thus on the pavement, they were sadly in everybody’s way; but

that, if he would follow her to Mr. Serjeant Moiles's chambers, they would find a better place to talk in.

In a quarter of an hour Mrs. Waldegrave, for such was her name, and Felix, with Julia seated upon a stool beside him, were sitting in a carpeted room before a good fire. He told all his history, and good Mrs. Waldegrave was greatly affected by it.

"I will go with you and see this unhappy Mrs. Le Smith," said she; and accordingly into that miserable chamber in Shoe Lane she went, greatly to the amazement of the mistress of the house, who, seeing one in silk and velvet making her way up the narrow, dingy staircase, for the first time in her life felt that her house was dirty.

We who know so well how true would be every word of Felix's history, need not tell all the pains which good Mrs. Waldegrave took to ascertain that it was so, nor how Mr. Serjeant Moile actually went himself to Le Smith, in the Fleet Prison, and clearly discovered the fraud which had been practised towards the poor boy.

By Mrs. Waldegrave's intervention, Mrs. Rundy was prevailed upon to admit her unhappy niece into her own house, not to live—but to die; and here also Felix and Julia found a comparatively comfortable home.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A STRANGER IN LONDON.

POOR Mrs. Le Smith died, and her last words were a blessing on Felix Law.

The very day after the funeral, Mrs. Moor, Mrs. Waldegrave's maid, came in the carriage to Mrs. Rudy's door, desiring that Felix might hastily dress himself very neatly, and come with her, for that her mistress wanted him immediately. Mrs. Moor wore a very mysterious air, and would give Felix no idea as to the important business upon which his presence was required.

"Oh, I know!" exclaimed Felix, rapturously, at length, "Christie's come! I am sure he is!"

"No, indeed he is not!" replied Mrs. Moor, in such a positive manner as at once sunk his hopes, and left him in uneasy conjecture the rest of the way.

"Now you must look your very best!" said Mrs. Waldegrave, meeting him at the library door; "I will not have you discrediting us by dismal looks; and I must have the pleasure of introducing you!" And so, opening the door, what was his utter amazement and inexpressible joy to see Mikky Hawes!

Joyous as the old man's nature was, the moment he saw Felix, he put his blue cotton pocket handkerchief to his eyes; while Felix, clasping him round the neck, kissed his withered, yet rosy cheek, over and over again.

"Aweel, bairn," said Mikky, holding him at arm's length, "ye's considerably grown in height—but ye look badly, and na wonder! But the Lord be praised that a' this iniquity's fand out. 'Th' missis here, and I, have had a deal a talk about ye."

"Yes," said Mrs. Waldegrave, who had been greatly pleased with the simple-hearted old man, "your friend arrived last night, and we have had a deal of talk; and now it is but fair that I leave you to the same indulgence. There will be a dinner for you and your friend, Felix, at one, and then I will see you again, and we can perhaps find some amusement for you both in the evening.

"Now, that's what I reckon a real gentlewoman!" exclaimed Mikky Hawes, the moment she was gone out.

"Oh there never was one like her!" exclaimed Felix, enthusiastically—"there never was! and I wish she was the queen! But how are they at Gibb's Ha'?" asked he, in the next breath, wishing he could put into one answer all he wished to know.

“They are but doing badly,” replied Mikky. “Alice, poor body, has had a sort o’ low fever hanging about her many months; and Christie looks quite th’ oud man! They hae had nought but ill luck, o’ late years! Th’ oud woman—ye have na forgotten Peggy?” said Mikky.

“No indeed!” returned Felix.

“Aweel, th’ oud woman played ’em a bad card at last. She set off, without sae much as a day’s warning, and went to Richard’s, as if on a veesit. Next day came a man wi’ a horse and cart, and wanted a’ her things; and, that varra day month, she died! and, would ye believe it, when they came to open th’ will, ivery penny, and th’ house i’ Garsthrop—a’ was left to Richard and his bairns. Christie went to th’ berrin—and a varra gert berrin it was!—and when th’ will was opened and read afore everybody, Christie flew into a fearful passion, and would na believe it was th’ true will; and when he saw th’ date, which was three years afore, and them present as had witnessed it, he was amaist beside himsel. She’d left a power o’ money; some thousands i’ th’ Kendal bank, beside what she had up and down on bond. And there were those present, and mysel amang ’em, as made free to tell Christie a bit o’ our minds—how he could na expect a blessing

when he'd gone clean against a dying man's will, and turned his fatherless and motherless bairn out o' doors!"

"But," interrupted Felix, filled with compassion for Christie, in his disappointment, "neither Mrs. Waldegrave nor Mr. Serjeant Moile believe that "Christie forbade my writing to him."

"Nay, nay," continued Mikky, "that was mair than Christie iver did! Ye see, after th' oud woman's death, naething seemed to prosper wi' him. The sheep got th' rot, and a power o' em died; and he left his hay standing, after iverybody's else's was got, just as if he was clean daft, and sae he niver could get it, for it was a wet latter-end: and his corn was th' warst i' a' th' dale;—and that was th' first year! and th' last has na been better. Iverybody said it was a curse come upon him for breaking his word wi' a dying man—that was ye'r ain father. Nay, ye need na greet! we's hope things will come round again, noo! Weel, ye see, when Christie's misfortunes came, a' like Job's, fra th' four winds o' heaven all at ance, I thought he was in hands mightier to punish than man's, and that it did na beseem me, as was but a poor sinful cretur like himsel, to be keeping up oud quarrels; sae when I heard as th' oud mare was dead—"

“Is she dead? poor creature!” interrupted Felix.

“Ay, and th’ white cow beside!—weel, when I heard this, says I to my oud woman, ‘I’s just gae across to Gibb’s Ha,’ for I begin to be varra sorry for ‘em.’ Sae I went up, and I put my pricks i’ my pocket, thinking, if they would be neeghbourly, why I’d e’en sit down a bit; and, would ye believe it? it was eleven o’clock afore I left th’ door, and it was daylight when I went; and that was last March! We’d a deal o’ talk aboot ye; sometimes we thought ye’d taken to Lunnon ways, and were really corrupted, and didna care about ye’r oud friends, and wanted to sell Linn’s Gill. Nay, ye need na start—that was what this Maister Le Smith said—what he was always writing aboot. Ye were at school, he said, and were to be a gert doctor o’ law, and a deal o’ money was wanted for ye’r edication; and that ye’d niver come back to Dent-dale, for ye liked Lunnon sae much better. Varra decent sort o’ letters he wrote, as would ha deceived ony body. Christie, poor man, readily took it a’ in, and said mony hard things about ye, as he’s repented of since; but Alice, she niver would believe at ye could like Lunnon best; and a sair heart she had; she was sometimes for writing to ye hersel, but she’s na scholar, poor woman,

and sae she niver did; and then, again, she was for setting off hersel to hear ye say it wi' her ain ears, afore she'd believe it;—and I think i' my heart she would hae done sae, but for this slow fever as has kept her badly sae lang. But we's be a' weel, noo the truth's come out! Weel, iver since that night i' March, we's been meeghty good friends; and lile Katie has been wi' us a matter o' two or three days at a time; for nane o' th' neeghbour's seemed inclined to be friendly, as they had been;—for ye mind, ye'r sel, and ye'r father, and a' ye'r father-folk afore ye, had leaved i' th' dale and been respected; and ivery body blamed Christie. I sall niver forget, th' first Sunday at Christie went to kirk after ye were gane. Parson preached fra th' text, 'Let thy fatherless children trust i' me;' and a varra good sermon he made. Iverybody's eyes turned upo' Christie; and, sure enough, vexed as I was wi' him, I felt amaist sorry, he looked sae ashamed. And 'Why does iverybody point at ye sae, father?' says ane o' th' lile bairns at he had in his arms. Somebody as stood by i' th' kirk-garth (churchyard) heard it, and it got quite a byword and a proverb. 'Why does iverybody point at ye sae?' was said behind him, mony and mony a time at Sed-

bur' market and fair, till he was amaist afraid o' going out o's ain door."

"Poor Christie!" exclaimed Felix, with real emotion.

"Weel but," continued Mikky, "when th' news came three day's syne, Christie sent ane o' th' lads, to bid me gae o'er directly; sae I went, and there I fand 'em like crazy folk. 'Read that,' says Alice, geing me th' letters; but I had na my glasses wi' me, sae I could na read 'em; and then Christie tried, but he greeted sae, because he said at he had been like a cruel stepfather to ye, that he could na; then Alice tried, but she's na hand at reading, and nane o' the lads could mae 'em out; sae I thought I must gae back again as I came; when in came th' Maister fro Dent-town school, and Christie gied 'em to him, telling him to read 'em out loud, for he cared na wha heard 'em. 'Th' Maister, and we a' greeted together, and then we a' shook hands round, we were sae glad; and then Alice brought out a bottle o' red wine at she'd had fro Sedbur,' to do her good, and we a' drank to ye'r happy return; and 'Ay yes,' says Alice, 'th' red wine 'ill do me good noo!' And sae we were varra merry. And th' Maister went and told iverybody, and they set Dent-town bells a-ringing: sae ye see ye're nae forgotten!"

“And poor Gideon!” said Felix, “you’ve said nothing about him.”

“Ay, poor cretur,” replied Mikky, “why, we gave him a glass o’ red wine too, and told him ye were coming back again, and he fell to greeting and laughing all at aince, like a’ th’ rest o’ us!—And they a’ send their love to ye—I must na forget that,” continued Mikky; “and Alice has sent ye half a dozen o’ new yarn stockings; they’re i’ my big-coat pocket; and Nelly o’ Rivelin, as soon as she learned as I was coming, she sent ye a bag o’ snaps; for, says she, ‘He’ll mappen like ’em for oud sake’s sake;’ and my oud woman has sent ye a gert red comforter, knit of a new sort o’ woo’ called German woo, at’s varra warm and soft. They’re a’ i’ my big-coat pocket, and ane o’ those smart young fellows, at stand a’ th’ door, took my big-coat and put it somewhere.”

“I must go and fetch it,” said Felix, impatient to receive these evidences of his friends’ good will.

“Noo, I niver thought,” said Mikky, after the capacious pockets of the big-coat had been emptied, and Felix had duly admired all his presents; “I niver thought to ha’ come to Lunnon i’ my oud age. But Christie, poor man, I knaw na why, did na seem to like th’ journey. I thought mappen as

things had gone sae badly wi' him, he didna like th' expense; sae I offered to come up mysel and see ye, and a' ye'r kind friends, and just loose my tongue upo' that Maister Le Smith, who I should like to see i' Dent-town just at this minute!"

CHAPTER XIX.

THE STRANGER STILL IN LONDON.

MIKKY HAWES spent three very pleasant days in London, and saw what would furnish a twelvemonth's talk in the dales. Mrs. Waldegrave, who, the more she saw of him, liked him the better, hired a fly with a pair of stout horses, for one whole day, and sent him and Felix, accompanied by her own woman, Mrs. Moor, out sight-seeing.

They saw the Colosseum and the Zoological Gardens, and all the fine buildings about the Regent's Park. They drove down by Hyde Park, and saw St. James's and Buckingham Palaces, and had the great good luck to see the Princess Victoria—she was not Queen then—going with all her ladies and attendants in her beautiful coach, like another Cinderella, on a state visit to her uncle, King William, at St. James's Palace; then up by

Charing Cross, and saw the bronze statues and the fine buildings there, and walked through the Exhibition, and the National Gallery—the old dales-man being far more amazed and dazzled by the gilt frames than by the pictures; and so along the Strand and through Temple Bar, and up Chancery Lane, that Mikky Hawes might see where Felix had first the great happiness of being seen by Mrs. Waldegrave; and while they were there they went down Holborn, and up Shoe Lane, and even into Harp Alley, and past the Fleet Prison, where lay Mr. Le Smith. “I would na open th’ door to set him free if I could,” said the old man, indignantly, “for I knawd oud Joshua Gilsland at brought him up, to say nothing o’ his villany to ye!” And from the Fleet Prison they drove to St. Paul’s. It was well that Mrs. Moor was the most insatiable of sight-seeing people, London born and bred, and proud of her glorious old city, as who that has happily lived in it, is not?

After they had seen all the wonders of St. Paul’s—whispering gallery and all—they saw the Mansion House, the Bank, the India House, and the Exchange—for it was not then burnt; and so, along Leadenhall Street and the Minories, to the Tower. Of course, very little time was allowed for seeing these

several objects; but it was enough for Mikky to see the outside of many of them, and a very hasty walk through others sufficed. The Beef-eaters, and the Armoury, and the Traitor's Gate, and Tower-hill, where queens and great men had been beheaded, filled him with wonder, and stamped the Tower of London on his mind for ever. This was the last sight they saw; and, the day wearing late, they drove straight away to Eaton Square, Mikky being, perhaps, as much amazed with what he called the "length of London," as with anything else.

The next day, Mikky Hawes returned to Dent-dale, but without Felix Law. Mrs. Waldegrave, in the main, believed Christie Swithenbank to be a very good kind of man, yet doubted whether it was altogether desirable that Felix should return to his guardianship. She would have preferred placing him with Mikky Hawes, but that was quite out of the question: such a pointed disrespect to Christie could not be thought of. Mrs. Waldegrave wished herself to become his guardian, in what manner we shall presently see: for this, the only thing wanting was Christie's consent. This scheme, full of benevolence as it was, was still furthered by Mr. Waldegrave.

"I like your young friend out of the north,"

said he to his wife that very morning; "I've had a deal of talk with him about the Yorkshire dales. He seems a fine intelligent fellow, and, I think, would do great credit to your Hampshire school. You have my full permission to do all for him which your kind heart dictates. Mr. Serjeant Moile, too, speaks much in his favour."

In the afternoon, Mrs. Waldegrave had a long closetting with Mikky Hawes, in the Library, and, the old man approving of all her plans, Felix also was made acquainted with them; nothing, therefore, remained but to obtain Christie's consent to his going to school in Hampshire, under the auspices of Mrs. Waldegrave.

CHAPTER XX.

A VISIT.

FEBRUARY wore on, and so did March and April, and it was now the beginning of May; and Mr. Waldegrave had been luxuriating in lamb's-wool stockings of Felix's knitting for two months. A very touching letter, full of humility and gratitude, had been received from Christie, giving his free consent to any plans which Mrs. Waldegrave might have

formed for his ward. Everything seemed prospering; and Felix retained not only the undiminished regard of Mr. and Mrs. Waldegrave, but of Mrs. Moor also.

"That little friend of yours, Julia Le Smith," said Mrs. Waldegrave to Felix, one day about this time, "is in a very deplorable state. Mrs. Moor saw her a few days ago, and she and I have been forming a little plan by which her life may be rendered more pleasant, if not altogether saved."

Felix wished, as he had often done before, that he might kiss the hem of Mrs. Waldegrave's garment; but he only expressed his pleasure and gratitude by words.

"Oh!" said she, smiling at what she thought very enthusiastic language, Mrs. Rundy must have a part of the credit, for it costs her money. My share is very small—merely to propose it, and take the child there; for she is to go into the country to be brought up. But I thought it would please you to leave her with a chance of health and comfort, before you go into Hampshire." Again Felix thought how good she was.

"Julia's new home," continued she, "is near Hampton Court Palace, where I will also take you; but you must carefully read **the** reign of Henry VIII. in your Markham.

We shall go to-morrow; so that you must be diligent to-day."

The next morning Mrs. Rundy, with the child neatly dressed in its new mourning, and its little wardrobe carefully packed in a new hair trunk, was driven in her baker's cart to the great house in Eaton Square. The neighbours' servants, looking upwards through the area-windows, thought Mrs. Waldegrave was a very strange lady, for queer-looking old country-men, and tradespeople in their carts, drove up to the door and were received in the lady's own room, by the lady herself. But no wonder! she had picked up a beggar-boy somewhere in the city, and, it was said, was going to make a great gentleman of him—so, what could be expected! And now there's a child and a box come with a fat woman in a baker's cart; and the next thing will be, that they all will be going out with my lady in the carriage. They were not quite right in this last surmise, for the fat woman was driven away again in the baker's cart; but sure enough, an hour afterwards, the carriage came to the door—the new britschka—and in got Mrs. Waldegrave, and the little "beggar-boy," handsomely dressed—and a very good-looking boy he was; and in got Mrs. Moor; and then one of the

housemaids brought out the child which had come in the baker's cart, which she gave into Mrs. Moor's arms; and then the little hair trunk was stowed away by the footman somewhere, who afterwards took his seat behind, and away they drove!

As they passed along the splendid streets and squares of the west-end, Felix thought of the time when he had been a miserable dweller in Harp Alley and Shoe Lane, and had looked at the glittering carriages full of their gay and happy people; and now, when he saw such as himself had been, with their shoes kept on their feet by the most comfortless contrivances, and in garments which indicated doleful poverty, a thanksgiving for himself almost found utterance, while a secret prayer was in his heart, that, though man might not befriend, yet that God would never forget the poor.

Little Julia, who had been overjoyed to meet with Felix, was permitted to sit between him and Mrs. Moor, on the back seat, and have the great pleasure of putting her hand into his; while Mrs. Waldegrave, looking at the feeble, meagre little invalid, and the happy boy before her, felt a pleasure which kings and queens, in the mere possession of royalty, might envy.

“Oh how delicious this is!” exclaimed Felix, as he looked round upon the open extent of Wimbledon Common, now golden with the early blossom of the gorse. “Look, Julia, what beautiful flowers!”

It was a pleasant thing indeed, to be driving abroad on such a fine morning, with the larks singing overhead, and the thrushes and blackbirds in the wayside plantations! Felix’s heart leapt with joy, for he had been more than two years a dweller in close alleys, and had almost forgotten how beautiful a May morning in the country really is. He looked on either hand at the noble trees, the park-like fields, and the elegant houses placed in quick succession among them, and then beheld the noble view from Kingston-hill; and his own beloved dale-country almost dimmed by comparison.

So they drove on through Kingston, and in half an hour more they were on Ditton Marsh, where lived Nurse Day, the old woman for whose cottage they were bound.

It was a white and remarkably clean cottage; but, what was the most singular feature about it, was the number of children playing around the door, and on the common before it. Poor little things! Some of them were lame, and went on crutches; some were

ricketty, and were creeping about with their thin limbs and swollen joints; most of them were pale and sickly-looking; yet, amongst them were striking exceptions—fine, hale children, with wild hair, and large, merry eyes, the pictures of animal life and glee.

“Poor little dear!” said Nurse Day, taking Julia Le Smith on her knee, “I see what’s amiss with her! The very inside’s burnt out with that poisonous gin! Why, ma’am, I’ve never a drop of gin in my house, nor Godfrey’s either! Good air and exercise, and plenty of good food and cleanliness—that’s my maxim! Mothers has a deal to answer for as uses gin!”

Felix whispered, that poor Julia’s mother was dead.

“Bless your thoughtful heart!” said the old woman; and she called her daughter. “Here, Mary, carry her out and show her the lambs! Children as comes out of London are always taken with the lambs, poor things! say nothing of the daisies—for, bless you, my children sit playing with daisies by the hour.”

Mrs. Waldegrave remarked upon the assemblage of little crippled objects that were seen playing about the door.

“Poor things!” returned the good old

nurse, "you see, none of those five have been with me above a month. Parents send their children out as spring comes on; and yet, they are all better than when they came. That little girl, walking by the paling, could not bear her own weight when she came; her father's a boot-last maker, in Huggin Lane; and that poor dear with the crutches—she'll always be a cripple—when she came, one could not hear her speak across the room; and yet, she's a happy little soul! Her parents, ma'am, are bakers in Thames Street."

"That's a fine little fellow, with the white curls!" remarked Mrs. Waldegrave.

"And yet, ma'am," returned the old nurse, "that child, two years ago, was worse to look at than this you've brought. His father, poor dear, made away with himself, and his mother went out of her mind, and he was put out to nurse; and when he came to me, he was four years old, but was no more than a case of bones! No, ma'am, children want nothing but plenty of wholesome food, exercise, and cleanliness; and, please God, we'll soon make an alteration in this little July."

Mrs. Waldegrave did not doubt but all would be done for her that was possible, for

a kinder, happier countenance she had never seen. And, all needful arrangements having been made respecting money-matters, Mrs. Waldegrave proposed that they should drive away, although Felix had not kissed nor said good bye to the child.

They returned, as had been proposed, by Hampton Court, and spent three hours in that fine old palace, and in walking about its gardens; and, in the balmy sunlight of that sweet May evening, drove back to town by Richmond.

It was two summers after this, that a travelling-carriage drove up to the King's Arms, Kendal; and, the night before, a shandry—the very same which had been broken at the bridge in Dent-dale—had driven also to an inn of less note in the same town. The driver of this shandry, being no other than our old friend, Christie o' Gibb's Ha,' at eleven o'clock in the morning took his stand in the street, just by the King's Arms, awaiting the arrival of the travelling carriage aforesaid! Christie had not waited long, when he saw a carriage and four horses coming up the street at a dashing rate. There were two men servants sitting before, and a well-dressed woman and a fine youth sitting in the rumble behind.

“I should na wonder if this is Lord Lowther or mappen th’ Duke o’ Northumberland himsel!” thought Christie, as the carriage drove up. It seemed to him prodigiously grand; and he glanced inside to see if a lord or a duke looked like other men, when the youth who sate behind said, in a low but clear voice of delight, “There’s Christie o’ Gibb’s Ha’!”

Very dull indeed must Christie have been, to wonder, as he glanced up at the boy, who was rapidly dismounting, how one belonging to such grand folks should know him; nor was it till he had grasped hold of his hand with an energy of joy, that it occurred to him that this was Felix; and these, then, were the Waldegraves! Poor Christie, he all at once seemed a very small man in his own eyes! Felix had grown tall, and had quite another look, than that he wore, five years before. But half a minute restored his identity.

“It’s ye, sure enough!” said Christie, “but how ye’s grown!”

They were only going to change horses here; and here Felix was to leave them for the two months’ visit to his friends; so, drawing Christie towards the open carriage door, where the landlady stood offering wine and biscuits, he said that Christie o’ Gibb’s

Ha' was waiting. Christie made his very best and lowest bow, and both Mr. and Mrs. Waldegrave spoke kindly to him.

"I hope you think Felix improved," said the latter.

"I did na know him, not I," returned Christie; "he's amaist grown a man!"

"And how's your wife and family?" asked she.

"A' varra weel, I's much obleeged to ye; and a' waiting, wi' blithe hearts, to see our young maister here," returned he, not venturing to call Felix "a bairn."

Felix's luggage was unstrapped, and Mrs. Waldegrave put forth her hand to bid him and Christie good-bye. "I shall come over and see you," said she, after the carriage door was closed. Felix looked a very happy and grateful reply; and then, nodding merrily to Mrs. Moor, as they drove off, and introducing Christie to her, in dumb show, they turned towards the small but handsome portmanteau that contained his wardrobe.

Christie had never acquitted himself so little to his own satisfaction—he was so taken by surprise; the equipage was so much grander than he had expected, that, though he would have liked to have said a world of grateful things, he felt as if he could not

open his mouth. In an hour's time, however, when he had taken his seat in the shandry, and was driving his stout brown horse at the rate of six miles an hour, he had tolerably recovered his equanimity, especially as Felix, although he was so grown, and looked so handsome, and so like a gentleman's "bairn," was as merry, and as full of affection to all his old friends, as he had ever been.

Oh what a happy coming back that was! He passed Willy Parrington's door, and was not even cast down by the remembrance of the last time he was there; and then, all through the Swiss-like Dent-town they drove, he wondering, the while, how it was that everything looked so small, and, he was sorry to confess it, so mean. He was quite afraid the very fells would be diminished, and the gills be less beautiful. At length they reached the bridge that crossed the beck, and turned to Gibb's Ha'.

"I think I could run faster than you can drive!" said Felix, growing very impatient; "I'm sure I can!" and he jumped out, without waiting for Christie to stop, and reached the garden gate about a minute and a half before the shandry.

"Oh my bairn!" exclaimed Alice, rushing to meet him, and, without remarking how

much he was changed, clasped him to her bosom, and kissed him with unbounded affection! Tommy, and Ralph, and Katie, and the other two, had rushed out also, but they saw the change instantly, and, feeling abashed, hung back.

“How ye’s grown!” said Alice, the next moment, looking at him through tears, “and what a nice colour ye’s got, and how smooth ye’r hair is! Oh my poor bairn! ye wer’na mair welcome to ye’r ain mother, than ye are to me! May God Almighty bless ye!”

Felix’s meeting with this affectionate woman had not been without tears, and, in the secret of his heart, he thanked God, who had thus restored him to the land of his fathers, and besought a blessing upon her and her household.

That was indeed a happy evening! and, no sooner had he kissed Katie, and shook hands with the boys, when in bounded the old dog, whining and twisting about his body, in an ecstasy of recognition; and then came in poor Gideon, as child-like as ever, eager to shake hands and display his smart old neckerchief: and, while yet they were all laughing and talking together, Tommy exclaimed that “Mikky and Elsy Hawes were a-coming!”

“Na doubt on’t,” replied Alice; “we sall

hae a full fireside to neeght. I knaw of at least a dozen as is coming; but I's got plenty to eat and drink; for if a fine feast were made to honour a disobedient bairn, should na we mae a yet finer feast when ane like our Felix comes back to us!"

THE END.

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